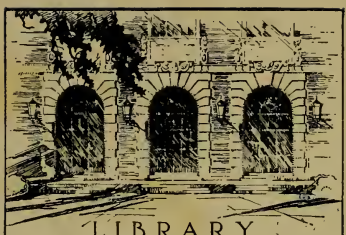

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"'Where are they' Tell me when to fire Where are they where are they'"
"'Where are they!" said Wardle, taking up a brace of birds which the dogs had deposited at his feet "Where are they!" Why, here they are"

THE

MANNERS OF THE DAY.

"Passant la moitié de leur temps à ne rien faire, et l'autre moitié à faire des riens." MARMONTEL.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

HENRY COLBURN AND RICHARD BENTLEY,

NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

1830.

LONDON:
IBOTSON AND PALMER, PRINTERS, SAVOY STREET, STRAND.

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THE

MANNERS OF THE DAY.

CHAPTER I.

Within the bond of marriage, tell me Brutus,
Is it excepted I should know no secrets
That appertain to you? am I yourself
But as it were in sort or limitation?
To keep with you at meals; consort your bed,
And talk to you sometimes?—Dwell I but in the suburbs
Of your good pleasure?

Julius Cæsar.

It would be difficult to embody a more pitiable picture than that of London,—or the ghost of London,—at the close of its season. The mansions of the West, in their long array of shuttered blindness; the grass-grown and desolate streets; the shops of late so assiduous in their courtesies,

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and now abandoned by their owners for the *délassemens* of Brighton or Margate; the once populous parks now waste and lonely as the dreary sands of Sahara; with no living soul stirring throughout the general desolation, save an occasional pepper-and-salt-official man puffing towards Brompton along Constitution Hill, or a broken down younger brother, haunting, like an unquiet spirit, the purlieus of the Clubs.—Such is the dreary spectacle contemplated by the luckless traveller through the red mists of a London August!—

With nothing to furnish forth the paltry materials of table-talk to the few remaining houses whose dinners united the fragments of society still extant throughout the metropolis,—with no better topic to illustrate the wonder-loving columns of the daily newspapers, than a fire-eater at Astley's, or a *débutante* in that hot-house *par excellence*, the Haymarket Theatre,—it will readily be imagined that the gratitude of the talkers and writers of the deserted town for the

remarkable event of Lord Willersdale's duel, was unbounded. It was wonderful by what a variety of *réchauffés* they continued to render it a daily novelty. Its motives, its "to be, or not to be," its consequences, real and prospective, the flight of the enemy along the Dovor road, the matin and vesper progresses of the carriages of Sir Henry Halford, and Dr. W., and Sir Astley Cooper, towards Hamilton Place, footmen in royal liveries detected in daily inquiry—all became matters of intense interest. A whole brigade might have been massacred in Spain, and a whole army frozen in Russia with less *éclat*.

The busy cabriolet of Mr. Brill was seen in hourly agitation between Whitehall, and White's, and the villa in the Regent's Park, bearing about bulletins and their notes explanatory. He it was who ascertained for the Duchess of Delvile that the Barony and the Irish estates of Willersdale were entailed upon Lady Danvers's second son; he it was who carried down

tidings to the Saturday *réunion* at Rosemount, that Honoria remained planted by the sick bed of her brother, and that Helen had returned unopened a letter from Colonel Seymour; while Lady Alberville in her turn convicted the fetcher and carrier of tittle-tattle, of having purchased his good information by the sacrifice of a sovereign to the porter in Hamilton Place!

(On the following day the name of Seymour had honourable mention in the Gazette; not where it might reasonably have been inscribed, in the list of bankrupts; but as under secretary of —— for the —— department!)

There are certain persons to be met with in the highest class of London society, whose presence there might reasonably excite as much astonishment as that of a dolphin in a stable-yard, or the passage of a fatted calf through the regions of the air; persons neither distinguished by birth, fortune, talent, figure, nor address. When any novice in the science of worldly wisdom is tempted to inquire "*Que diable*

vient il faire dans cette galère?" the answer generally leaves the mystery doubly mystified. "Oh! it is only Mr. ——; you will meet him at D. House, and Lady L's, and Lord H's;—he is a man who is to be seen every where." But the still more curiously inquisitive, who are anxious to ascertain the original cause of this universal apparition, the latent merit which could give vogue to a man of low extraction, and vulgar habits, will generally find a *parvenu* of the class in question to be what is termed a *useful man*;—endowed with moderate abilities and great subserviency; who will lend an active pen and an untiring voice to any cause wherein he may be profitably retained; whose well-drilled temper can endure and forget a passing insult; and who brings to the table of his patron the news of the day, and a pun or two of moderate merit, in return for a cutlet and a *soufflé*. A being of this pliant character, once favoured by an auspicious opening into society, is sure of rising to its highest point. "It is an eagle only, *or a reptile*," says the philosopher,

" which attains the summit of the pyramid." And a minor courtier, such as Mr. Brill, may be fairly included among the creeping things innumerable, who owe their elevation to the patience of their crawling.

The society of London at the present moment, indeed, has assumed a character unprecedented in its annals; like the government of ancient Venice, it is a sort of oligarchical republic; a mode of constitution peculiarly unfitted to our national habits. The prolonged deficiency of a court has naturally suspended the influence of royal supremacy over the private circles of the nobility; the restraining veto of a kingly voice has been missing; and Almacks, the High Court of Parliament, although it affords a tolerably fair representation of the people, (of fashion,) requires a still higher tribunal to complete the balance of power.

In the mean time the temporary dictation of the *grand monde* has been conceded to certain members of the aristocracy, who have maintained its honours with equal mag-

nificence and refinement. But it is remarkable that the most distinguished of these are *men—single men;* and it is but reasonable to believe that such judges may have been influenced in their verdicts by motives of favour and gallantry, sanctioning the admittance into society of many objectionable members. Men, and particularly unmarried men of a certain age, are willing to be amused at any cost; their personal pleasures form their first object. They have nothing to forfeit by association with women of doubtful reputation, or men of ignoble character; —let the women be elegant or handsome, and the men witty or entertaining, and their own splendid position in the world will throw its lustre over any failure of better qualifications. A coterie formed under such circumstances will probably assume a tone of matchless charm and fascination; but like certain flowers which are said to have thriven of old upon the summits of the Grecian mountains, its very fragrance conveys a subtile poison to the intoxicated senses.

It were an ungracious task to inquire into the degree and nature of the changes effected in society by the jurisdiction which had been so provident for its lighter pleasures. It appears generally allowed that the course of the last fifteen years has been one of gradual and imperceptible demoralization;—a circumstance generally attributed by English fathers of families, to the contagion imported in our unlimited intercourse with the continent. Perhaps it might be more honest to look at home for the sources of the evil.

A few years will now suffice to shew in what degree the supremacy of a resident court may avail to alter the existing order of things. There is a moral *cordon sanitaire* placed by the peremptory decencies of society around the throne of Majesty, which at once forms an admonition to the licentious, and renders to the wholesomeness of virtue, an appropriate and honourable distinction. *Mais revenons à nos moutons!*

If the scattered coteries of autumnal London, whose worst state of dulness becomes lively by comparison with the most animated gaieties of the provinces, were touched and excited by the acknowledged danger of the ex-minister, what was the redundance of exclamation, and sympathy, and horror which echoed through the halls of the Lilfields on so momentous an occasion! That a brother-in-law should die, and die during the Boxfield race-week, was an event sufficiently important in the annals of Beech Park; but that the brother-in-law should be an Irish Baron, a recent minister of state, and sacrificed in the progress of his parliamentary duties, were facts to animate the tongue of my daughter Lilfield into a clamour of commiseration. "Her poor dear sister!—such a young, giddy thing as Helen to be left a widow!—Was her jointure properly secured—would she be entitled to a pension?——"

Sir Robert, who had been an ear-witness to the altercation in the house, between the Goth-

amite and Lord Willersdale, and who had now found his way to Beech Park, with a file of sympathizing newspapers, instead of the expected turtle and cooks, could scarcely find breath to answer the universal interrogation that greeted his arrival. While his Anna Maria and Lady Mordaunt immediately began discussing the proportionate width of their approaching hems, and the fitting depth of their sable vesture, Sir Robert busied himself with wondering whether the Delviles would consider it an unnecessary piece of ceremony, that the Beech Park party had been broken up in compliment to the danger of their political rival; and Sir Stephen, in computing on the back of one of the luckless race-cards (names, weights, and colours of the riders) the expense of post-horses back to London. Something of paternal dignity whispered to him that Lady Willersdale ought to be supported by the presence of her family in this trying emergency; but as soon as he had fixed the inevitable sum

total at 41*l.* 7*s.* 9*d.* he resolved to defer so magnanimous an expenditure, till the arrival of more definite intelligence from town. Lady Mordaunt could not bear to leave her dearest Anna Maria (till she had turned her visit to its usual profitable account); and Lord Willersdale might not die after all; or, if he did, what had the family gained by the connexion to render them interested in the event? Helen had not yet been so much as presented on her marriage: her brothers, clerical and military, remained at par;—and then, as my daughter Lilfield sensibly observed, "a man who perishes in a duel, can be regarded as little better than a suicide!" Ergo, Sir Stephen and Lady Mordaunt remained at Beech Park; and very little did they imagine with what self-gratulation the modified announcement of their intention to that effect, was welcomed by Lady Willersdale.

In truth, there had yet occurred no moment of Helen's married life, in which the interposition of other society between herself and her

husband would have been so unsatisfactory. To the presence of Lady Danvers she was perforce compelled to accustom herself; but by a strong effort of self-governance, she had in a great degree conquered the feelings of embarrassment and restraint arising from the observation of a witness so distasteful. She had become aware that by permitting Honoria to remain an impassable barrier between herself and Lord Willersdale, she might doom herself to perpetual exile from his affections and confidence. It is probable that no excitement less powerful than the terrible crisis which had served to draw the veil from their eyes, and to develope the relative positions of the three, would have broken the chilling ice of reserve which had hitherto separated her from her husband's bosom. But once thawed, the warm current of their mutual feelings flowed with the force of nature; it was a tide whose strength admitted of no refluent action. Neither the counsels of the medical synod, nor the impor-

tunate fidgeting of Mr. Soda, could persuade Lady Willersdale to abandon the post of nurse which she had claimed as her peremptory right; nor could the sufferer find words or occasions sufficient to express his heartfelt exultation and gratitude, for every fresh token of her growing affection.

To Helen's unspeakable joy, the restraint which for many days had been imposed upon their lips, became at length superfluous. At the end of a week, Lord Willersdale's strength was sufficiently restored to admit of his conversing without danger and without difficulty; and oh! with what endless discourse did her eager interrogations task his convalescence! Like friends meeting after a prolonged absence, every thought and every feeling furnished themes for mutual inquiry and confidential discussion. All the errors, real and imaginary, of her heart, and mind, and conduct, were honestly laid open to her husband's scrutiny, by the self-accusing Helen; there were only two

subjects on which she permitted herself to retain the least reserve, and these were the character of Lady Danvers, and the conduct of Colonel Seymour. She felt that although lavish of her own, the secrets of others were not fairly at her disposal.

Meanwhile Lady Danvers herself, however jealous of the good understanding and growing esteem between her brother and his beautiful bride, was fully aware of the impotence of any counteracting manœuvre at such a moment. The cessation of Lord Willersdale's personal danger, too, had rendered the emergence less pressing. The succession she had been so anxious to secure to her son, unshackled by the incumbrance of such a jointure as the liberality of his doating affection for his youthful wife might suggest, was still a remote prospect. Satisfied by her confidence in the frailty of female nature, that some future recoil in Helen's feelings would supply the opportunity meditated by her malice, she was

content for a time to abandon the field. But she contrived to render even her retreat harassing to the object of her enmity.

Honoria was too cunningly observant of passing events, not to note with disgust the admiration and increasing interest of her brother, for the artless simplicity of Helen's character, and the lively intelligence of her mind. Her comments upon books and men were those of an untrammelled understanding; they were original, and acute, and free from the monotony of the set phrases of society. And the tone of her observations possessed another and a still more effectual charm in the ears of her husband—that of unexpressed but most deferential submission to his better judgment. Although her wakening tenderness towards him had outgrown the influence of her respect for his character, and admiration of his talents, those original feelings remained unabated. They were seen through the powerful but

transparent medium of her love, and were perhaps magnified by its refraction.

During the tedious days of Lord Willersdale's slow recovery, Lady Danvers, unwilling at once to throw off the mask of sisterly tenderness which she had at first coloured so highly, was forced in her own despite to sit in audience of these conjugal scenes of mutual confidence; and she was scarcely more thwarted than surprised, on finding how little her presence acted as a restraint upon the enfranchised mind of Helen—how little her empty *persiflage* and covert sneers availed to check her artless gaiety. She saw that the development of Lady Willersdale's character had received a powerful confirmation from the accidental trials to which she had been exposed; that the importance of *principle* as the guide of every action, had become evident to her experience; and that the self-reliance, arising from the consciousness of virtuous intentions, had elevated her

above herself. Her line of policy therefore sought a less direct mode of introducing discord into the new Eden, of which she found herself a reluctant inmate. She affected to believe that her brother's spirits required the stimulus of occasional society; and by contriving to fasten upon him at every hour of the day some former colleague, or friend, or casual visitor, as a valuable resource against the monotony of female society, she effectually interrupted that unrestrained colloquial intercourse between himself and Lady Willersdale, which had been so grateful to the feelings of both.

Lord Willersdale, however, was of the three far the more easily reconciled to this change of habits. The position of public affairs was too deeply interesting to his mind not to enhance the value of free discussion with those of his own sex and calling. He was anxious to acquaint himself with all the circumstances immediately following his own secession from political life; with the misrepresentations to which his

conduct had been subjected; with the recently past, and present, and anticipated measures of the new administration. His former coadjutors, and personal friends, were eager to crowd around him and express their sympathy in his unexpected restoration to his family and his country; and a little habitual knot of the order of club-men of a certain age, which may be readily found in London, even during the autumn, was speedily and indissolubly formed in Hamilton Place. At first, indeed, while his evident debility offered some plea for the necessity of female attendance, he was content that Helen, with her book or her work in her hands, should remain an unobtrusive member of the circle. An occasional apology from some of the more courteous of his political associates for the exclusive tone of their conversation, seemed, however, to rebuke her presence; and dreading, with an oversensitive delicacy, that one or both of them might be exposed to ridicule by the constant and tender vigilance of her attendance,

he affected to perceive that she was wearied and disgusted by the dry constitutional questions that were constantly agitated in her presence, and to insist on her devoting those hours to air and exercise, and recreation, in which he was enabled to secure the society of his male friends.

Lady Willersdale, with the tact of her growing experience, readily learned that some latent motive, which he did not care to express, was the immediate origin of her husband's solicitude for her diversion; but she was too eager to comply with his first request, to allow herself an over-curious examination into its nature. Acquiescence in his will was her first object. But upon a deliberate consideration of their mutual position, the remote, but mighty influence of Lady Danvers upon her destiny, even in this seemingly unimportant occurrence, became painfully evident to her apprehensions. Instead of strengthening her somewhat exhausted health by the exercise so strenuously recommended by Lord Willersdale, she passed

her time in meditating in the silence of her chamber upon the mischiefs that might again menace the peace of her domestic life, if this mischievous extrinsic influence were permitted to interpose between them; and one day, in a fit of desperate resolution, she hazarded some slight attempt to counteract the future intrigues of the cunning Honoria.

"I have inquired of Dr. W." said she, as she drew her footstool towards Lord Willersdale's sofa, "how soon he will give you a respite from this irksome confinement. All the recent airings he has sanctioned, appear to have renovated your strength; and he assures me that change of air and scene are now alone wanting to perfect your recovery."

"My poor Helen!" answered the invalid, laying his hand caressingly upon her head, "how can I wonder that you pine after green trees and rose-bushes; you, to whom this desert of brick walls is so unfamiliar, and must necessarily appear so irksome. You are longing

for the green lawn at Hollywood, instead of the daily spectacle of this dusty carpet. Well, love—be it so; let us remove next week to Richmond."

"You are still wide from the mark," replied Lady Willersdale, with blushing embarrassment. "We will remove next week to Hollywood, since you so kindly acquiesce in my desire; but only in the hope of expediting your recovery. The ultimate object of my anxiety is far more remote."

"Dearest Helen, you almost terrify me by your anxious and mysterious air. Has my sister infected you with her continental predilections? I understand Lord Danvers talks of wintering at Rome; have you any inclination to join their party?"

"By no means—on no possible consideration!" exclaimed Helen, eagerly; enchanted by the discovery of a plan, which had not yet been confided to her ear. "Oh! no! My project is of a far more domestic character. Can-

not you guess?" she continued, affectionately taking his hand between her own.

Lord Willersdale looked hurriedly towards the door, as if in apprehensive that the sudden arrival of some of his grave political associates might surprise him in this familiar attitude; then shook his head in earnest negative.

"Can you remember no promise made to me during our *former* Richmond days, when my inclinations seemed of very flattering importance in the formation of your plans?—Can you remember nothing of a project to pass the summer and autumn in Ireland?"

"The summer has already more than cheated us. September is approaching."

"Be it then the autumn and winter; or, if you will, the winter and the spring."

Lord Willersdale smiled at her eagerness.—"I am expecting Honoria every minute," said he. "Suspend your entreaties till you have referred to her experience touching the *agrémens* of a winter in Ireland; and touching the

discomfiture and dulness of Willersdale Castle. With all my ancestral prejudices to plead in its favour, I have not visited my Irish estates these five years."

"I should say—to your shame! were I not well aware that your public duties have detained you in London. But now that you have no longer an excuse for remaining an absentee, I trust I shall persuade you to introduce me to your native country."

"My dear girl, I cannot allow you to delude yourself into a sacrifice you are incapable of estimating. *You*, Helen! you, who regard the pleasures of society, and even the dissipation of London, with the favour so natural to your age; *you*, to be snowed up during a whole dreary winter, in the county of Galway!"

"Let us hope that it will not snow during the *whole* winter," smilingly persisted Lady Willersdale. "Besides, our friendship commenced on the bank of a frozen pond, which has given me a prejudice in favour of skaiting."

"And Almacks,—and the Opera?"

"I thought I had received your promise to recur no more to my forgotten sins?"

"Pray do not persuade yourself that I object to your moderate enjoyment of all such amusements as become your situation in the world. On the contrary, I look forward to sharing them in your company, now that I have thrown off, or perhaps I should say, now that I have been *divested* of my official harness."

"I should very much prefer becoming your companion in your winter walks and spring rides through Willersdale chase."

"You are a wild enthusiast, dear Helen. But on this occasion I cannot think of seeing you 'cursed with a granted prayer.'"

"Do not refuse me," faltered Helen; her anxiety increasing with the difficulties she encountered. "Dearest Willersdale, pray, pray do not refuse my first, my only personal entreaty," she continued, affectionately throwing her arms around him. "Do not endanger our newly-found happiness, our new-felt tenderness,

by rushing back inconsiderately into the scenes which perilled or retarded their development."

"While my Helen loves me and confides in my regard, what can I have to fear?"

"Much—much! oh much! From the weakness of human nature—from the machinations of the worthless—from the untoward march of events in this unmanageable world."

"Dear Helen! the virtue that takes refuge in a hermit's cell, evinces little confidence in the strength of its own principles."

"Remember my age—my secluded existence before we met—my imperfect education—and decide whether I can justly confide in myself? No! no! Willersdale; you know me for a giddy inexperienced child; you have made that child your wife—you assure me that she is still dear to you"——

Lord Willersdale imprinted a silent kiss upon her forehead.

"Then do not again hazard your own happiness and hers. Take her to your bosom—

take her—precious distinction! to your *confidence*. Strengthen her mind by your counsels, by your instructions, by solitary hours passed in your society. At Willersdale you would have time to lavish upon the task;—a task, believe me, whose labours would be forwarded by my own fervent endeavours to secure your approval—by my own fond eager gratitude for your self-devotion. And the time would come, Willersdale, when time and your better wisdom having confirmed my desire to become a more worthy companion to yourself, I should feel more qualified, and more content to resume that station in society in which you seek to place me. Do not—do not deny me! for every wish of my bosom is centred in your compliance."

Thus fondly importuned, it is scarcely to be supposed that the amiable and affectionate Lord Willersdale could long persist in his opposition. Having secured the favourable opinions of all his medical advisers, he proceeded reluctantly to unfold this new project to Lady Danvers;

but, with the cautious tenacity of mankind in maintaining their personal independence, he alluded to the plan as originating solely in his own determination. However suspicious of the truth, Honoria guarded herself from all expression of surprise or disapprobation; she saw that Lord Willersdale's resolution was permanently and deliberately taken, and that opposition on her part would be fruitless.

"I had half dreamed, my dear brother," she carelessly observed, "of enticing you both to accompany my family to the south of Italy. But all things considered, you have probably judged better for yourself. Lord Danvers has been ordered to pass the winter at Pisa, which, if I remember it, will prove but a dull residence; however his physicians assure him that his health requires a change of climate, and the girls write me word that they are enchanted with the plan."

Lady Willersdale, whose improved acquaintance with Honoria's habits assured her that if

it had suited her ladyship better to pass the winter at St. Petersburgh, the acquiescent Lord Danvers would have found himself professionally advised to try the effect of the vapour baths on the banks of the Neva,—and who was equally convinced that her sister-in-law would endure the maternal destinies of Niobe without a tear, could not but be secretly amused by this affected resignation of herself to the interests and inclinations of others.

"I shall probably return for the opening of Almacks, unless I can persuade some one to take my list for the season. I do not feel myself justified, on my daughter's account, in giving in my decided resignation. Mary must be presented next year; and one slips but too easily out of the memory of the fashionable world!"

Helen secretly exulted in this assurance. Her own hope was to be forgotten in her turn.

"Besides," continued Lady Danvers resuming her spirits, "you and I, brother, must re-

gard ourselves as in some measure a discomfited force. We both retire from the world for a time; and we must take care that the public do not regard our *retreat* as utter *defeat*. I mean to conquer like a Parthian."

"And *I* limit my ambition, dear Honoria, to falling with decency. A disabled man," said he, glancing at the sling which still supported his arm, "must abandon all thought of defence. I leave the field to the Delviles, and Harbertons, and Seymour, and Melbournes, and such open enemies and treacherous friends."

Lady Danvers was amazed to perceive with how unperturbed a countenance Helen could now endure all casual mention of the name of Seymour; but she was puzzled to decide whether this acquired insensibility arose from the fearlessness of a pure heart, or from the boldness of guilt. She only knew that she detested, with an unqualified hatred, the victim who had escaped her scheming; and that in quitting England as she did, harassed by mor-

tification and disappointment, her best consolation was the hope that before her return, her brother's ill-assorted marriage would reap its reward in the alienation of Helen's feelings—in a renewal of her suspended course of dissipation—and in the consequent corruption of her mind. The patient forecast of evil entertained by a really malicious female heart, is almost miraculous!

On the following week the Morning Post carefully noted the departure of Lord and Lady Danvers and family from the York Hotel, Dover; and the arrival of Lord and Lady Willersdale and suite at Holyhead.

CHAPTER II.

"Vous me faites un tableau de la campagne auquel je ne m' attendois pas. On dit ces gens là si à plaindre."

"Ils l' étoient il y a quelques années; mais j'ai le sécret de rendre leur condition plus douce. Ce sécret—le voici!—J'ai quarante mille livres de rente;—je n'en dépense que dix ou douze à Paris!"

Marmontel.

It was one of the happiest days of our Helen's life on which she woke, after a tedious journey, to find herself established in Willersdale Castle. The convalescent had been so carefully guarded by her cares as to have suffered but little from his fatigues; and the refreshment of a purer air already seemed to renovate his depressed spirits and exhausted strength.

Lord Willersdale did not profess, and pro-

bably did not feel himself to be of the intemperate order of Irish patriots. Although essentially of Irish extraction, both his father and himself had been born in England, and educated in England. The vocation of courtiership had retained his parents from year to year within sight of the turrets of St. James's or of the round tower of Windsor; and his own official and parliamentary existence had circumscribed his whereabout within limits scarcely more extended. In those early days of mental heroism which temper the dreams of every intelligent schoolboy, and which teach us to look upon the world as a creation imperfect, but easy to be perfected,—as a disordered machine on the eve of a general reform,—Lord Willersdale's glowing philosophy had expanded into a thousand projects for the amelioration of his ancestral country. He saw in its prospects a *beau idéal* of national prosperity; and regarded his Irish estates only as an area on which to erect villages, and factories, to be tenanted by a

happy and flourishing population, of which he was to be the resident lord and lawgiver. His noble father, who on the contrary regarded the lands of Willersdale as a remote territory, peopled by savages, whereon timber might be grown and rents levied for the brilliant maintenance of a mansion in May Fair, listened to the enthusiastic plans of his youthful heir with equal astonishment and contempt; and, muttering some mysterious allusion to Bedlam and Dr. Willis, advised him to lock up his chimerical prospectus in his writing-desk, till his return from the tour of Europe. Fortunately for the fame of his consistency, young Willersdale followed these modifying counsels; for his first movement, on recurring to the archives of his Irish Utopia, five years afterwards, was to consign his infant project to the flames.

This refrigeration of his patriotic ardour arose, perhaps, no less from enlarged experience of men and countries, and their modes of government, than from a better acquaintance with

the history of his own. From the re-action of his mind it *certainly* proceeded; for even in his youth, Lord Willersdale was little influenced by received opinions, or by the common place arguments of the world. Those of his countrymen, indeed, whom he had met with during his residence abroad, were chiefly young men of intemperate political principles, partizans rather than friends to the cause of their native land; and their vehement and ill-judging patriotism materially tended to moderate his own. "*Il n'y a rien qui refroidit*," said Napoleon, "*comme l' enthousiasme des autres.*"

The first visit of the young cosmopolite to the castle of his ancestors, still further availed to damp his anticipations of an Hibernian millennium. But while he permitted himself to despond over the prospects of Ireland, and that too with personal feelings somewhat revolted by the first aspect of her degradation, his interest in the national cause assumed a less exalted, but a more permanent tone of sympathy. Re-

signing his hopes of the restoration of its pristine dignities, or, what were better far, of the dawn of its subordinate prosperity;—abandoning without hesitation his plan of residence at Willersdale, as an inefficient and fruitless sacrifice, he fixed with a most liberal provision upon his estates, an agent better qualified than himself to advance the interests of his tenantry; and formed a resolution far better kept than his original flighty determination, to expend upon the improvement, and for the general advantage of his property and its dependants, an annual income, doubling the profits that might have been derived from his settlement on the spot.

Through life, Lord Willersdale was fortunately enabled to pursue these generous and benevolent intentions. He was at once an opulent and an unincumbered man; and excepting in a few instances of pecuniary munificence towards his sister, his mode of living was beneath rather than above the standard of his

fortunes. Nor had the increased splendours of his matrimonial establishment at present encroached upon his moderation. Mr. Daly, his resident agent, who was the younger son of a family of consideration in the county, had thus the satisfaction of finding his own good-will and liberal views towards his countrymen, furthered on all occasions by the sanction of his patron. Instead of the rapacity and unceasing exaction by which an absentee-landlord and his representatives are rendered abhorrent in the eyes of their peasantry, the Willersdale tenants found work and liberal pay provided for their industry, a merciful consideration for their sickness or old age, and the strictest impartiality for the adjustment of their claims and differences. With all their national fervour of devotion towards the lord of the soil, they were but little impatient of his non-residence amongst them; for being deeply impressed with an opinion of his influence in the councils of his soyereign, they believed the interests of Ireland

to be solely guarded by his parliamentary exertions; while they were reminded by his rights over themselves and their property only by acts of clemency and generosity.

It is probable that there existed not throughout Ireland, or even England, a more contented or more orderly tenantry than that which did honour to the worthy Daly's legislation. Their tranquillity was even undisturbed by the religious feuds which are too often made the outlet of ill-blood and malicious feeling. The priest who presided over their little Catholic congregation, was remotely connected with the family of the agent, and was a guest as welcome at his table as the resident Protestant clergyman; whose moderate stipend had been raised into importance, by a liberal salary, as chaplain and librarian to his absentee lord. Mr. Edwards and Father O'Daly remained on terms of distant but respectful friendship; occasionally meeting in a black letter hunt in the library of

the Castle, or upon some errand of benevolence on the demesne; but in all instances avoiding, as much in self-respect as in deference to the opinions of their common patron, professional interference or personal collision.

With the services of three such dispassionate ministers of religion and finance at his disposition, it is evident that Lord Willersdale had nothing to apprehend from the danger of absenteeism. So rare an union will probably be pronounced chimerical, and the absence of all political or religious violence an impossible blessing. In fact, the whole secret consisted in the liberality of the landlord. The bitterness of heart which unites the disaffected, and the personal animosity which appears to arise out of contending creeds, are but the national consequences of poverty and deprivation. Want, and the imaginary consciousness of oppression, tend to irritate the unenlightened minds of a race peculiarly characterized by vehemence of

temperament; and *occupation* and *bread* form arguments more persuasive in their ears, than a thousand homilies or a thousand vice-regal edicts.

Had Lord Willersdale been hitherto unconvinced of the excellent sense and excellent feeling displayed by Mr. Daly in the dispensation of his authority, the gratifying spectacle which had greeted him on every side during his progress through the estate, would have caused him as much surprise as gratification. The villages which had been left at the death of the late Lord, a monument of the evil administration and tyrannical rapacity of his agents, had become, from a noisome mass of filthy hovels, wholesome and orderly and well-distributed settlements. The several tenements, however small, were maintained in careful repair, and surrounded by patches of garden ground in a tolerable degree of cultivation. Central schoolhouses for the children both of the Protestant and Papist population had been erected in each;

and not a single trace remained of the squalid wretchedness and coarse depravity that had formerly disgusted the English refinement of Lord Willersdale.

"Where are the huts and the beggary you promised me?" exclaimed Helen, as they drove through the straggling but decent streets of Willersville. "What has become of your humorous description of an Irish village? There are quite as many slated houses, and hollyhock's—and fewer pigs and bare-legged boys visible here, than at Mordaunt."

"We must thank Daly for the change of scene," replied Lord Willersdale, deeply penetrated by the sight of so wondrous an amendment in the condition of his people. "My conscience rebukes me that I have been but little instrumental in so good a deed."

His meditations were interrupted by the acclamations of a gathering crowd, which now began to recognize the Willersdale liveries.

"Sure, it's my Lard, every inch of him;

coming in state as in rason bound, with the young lady and the ould coach."

"Long life to yeer Lardship! long may yeer lardship reign over us; and if its in the ould castle, my lard, ye're thinking of taking up, sure there's not a hill in the barony but 'll bleeze for it the night, if there's a turf or a fagot on the land."

"And sure, my lard," exclaimed an old woman, who was clinging in breathless curiosity to the carriage door,—"sure my lard, it's only that our hearts warm to the face of yees, and the sighth of one of the ancient family—for it's nothing we're wanting from yeer lardship.—Squire Daly and jistice agin the world!"

"I trust I shall be too philosophical to grow jealous of this Angelo of mine," said Lord Willersdale, turning cheerfully to his wife as the carriage drove onward to the castle, amid the reiterated acclamations of the crowd. "And I trust Daly himself is too reasonable a man to imagine that my unannounced arrival is intended to pry into the secrets or the nakedness of

the land. On my last visit to the castle, which I grieve to say is more than five years past, the 'boys,'—as the male population of whatever age seem inclined to call themselves,—having some notice of my coming, exerted their loyal limbs in dragging my carriage from the village to the court-yard; on entering which, by a dextrous overturn, the post-chaise and my footman's arm were broken; while my own bruises rendered my triumphal entry somewhat dispiriting. But see! dearest Helen!—yonder on the brow of the hill, you may catch the outline of the castle."

Lady Willersdale, whose youthful imagination had been prompt to connect the name of *castle* with images of feudal grandeur, with Windsor and Warwick, or the ruins of Ludlow and Kenilworth, was unpleasingly surprised by the first aspect of her future abode. The Castle of Willersdale presented itself to her view, as a huge unshapely pile of brick;—darkened indeed by the lapse of years, for

its foundation dated from the reign of the second James; but still, utterly unqualified to claim the honours of hoar antiquity. The building had been completely restored soon after the accession of George the First, by the last lord permanently resident on the estate; and unfortunately, at an epoch which had little served to amend the architectural taste of the original construction. Nothing indeed could be more unseemly than the heavy battlemented parapets which crested a frontage disfigured by innumerable modern sashes,—manifestly accusing the absurdity of any such warlike appendage. The court-yard was handsomely paved, and of immense extent; but it was only calculated to reveal and unite in one offensive focus, all the mysteries of the domestic offices, and all the disorder of the stable-yard, which modern taste so carefully recedes from observation.

The only feature which counterbalanced, on a first view, these striking errors of design, was a stately grove of ancient and magnificent trees,

in which the castle seemed to stand embowered; and which was prolonged from its Eastern entrance into an avenue of considerable extent. The wood immediately sheltering the mansion was chiefly formed of chesnuts, pinasters, and cedars, and other trees of a gloomy and massive foliage, imparting a character of sombre dignity to the landscape; while among its unmolested shades, an extensive rookery sent forth its busy clamours into the sky. Nor did the internal distribution or decorations of the castle itself, in any degree atone for the absence of exterior embellishment. A hall of enormous dimensions, wainscoted with black oak, and paved with grey and white marble, formed its cheerless entry; and served to dispense an inhospitable chilliness throughout the branching corridors and adjoining chambers.

The furniture of these, which to a modern spectator appeared distributed with meagre scantiness, was sufficiently old to be faded, and formal, and tasteless, without aspiring to the solid and gor-

geous splendours of a still more ancient date; and nothing could appear more comfortless than the wide suite of state chambers, with their hollow sound, and musty, uninhabited smell. The damp and ill-hung walls, excepting in a few chambers lined with oak or cedar, were rendered doubly grim by files of miserably painted portraits of former worthies of the House of Willersdale; who seemed looking down from their frames, with a melancholy sneer upon the decaying glories of a mansion—the time-honoured scene of their living exploits. On these, however, Lord Willersdale attempted to fix the attention of the weary and listless Helen, with something more of family pride than he had ever yet been tempted to display in her presence. The effigy of a hairy monster, whom he pointed out as one of the companions of Tir-Owen to the court of Elizabeth, and the ghastly representation of a warrior in a flowing wig, who had covered it with laurels in the battle of the Boyne, were trophies of art more precious in

his prejudiced eyes, than the choicest portraits of Rubens or Vandyck!

On the following morning, however, Lady Willersdale's impressions of her new abode became singularly amended. A bright September sun shone upon her rising, and sparkled like a sheet of gold upon the broad waters of the Shannon,—flowing at the base of the acclivity on the brow of which the castle raised its massy elevation. Rich woods, varying in all their sunny variety of autumnal tints, clothed the opposite bank of the river; among which, facing a distant bend of the stream, some traces of a considerable mansion-house might be traced through its verdant screen of limes and beeches. Lady Willersdale's English eye sought in vain around the castle for vestiges of a flower-garden; and at first with feminine feelings of disappointment. But a second glance at the simple dignity of the grassy slope descending towards the river, shrubberied by apparently uncultivated thickets of myrtle and arbutus, the latter brightened by a

rich profusion of pendent waxen flowers, satisfied her of her error. There was a breadth and grandeur about the whole scene palpably unaccordant with the parterre-prettiness of a Richmond villa. The sight of two or three gaunt, but magnificent greyhounds stalking among the untrimmed masses of evergreen shrubs, and the reiterated scream of the peacocks from the adjoining grove, were much more in character with the keeping of Willersdale Castle.

On being ushered by the disconsolate Vernon through a maze of useless passages towards the breakfast table which, gothic and homely as it was, had cost Monsieur Laurent and old Mrs. O'Mahoney a world of pains and borrowing to furnish forth, Lady Willersdale found her husband already surrounded by visitors. Mr. Daly's cordial and weather-tinged face required no announcement; the gratified and joyous smile with which he was receiving the thanks of Lord Willersdale immediately explained their relative position. Beside him sat a man of advanced

years, whose shrewd deep-set eyes gave tokens of acuteness, which were tempered into an air of observant benevolence by a mouth of most expressive sweetness. His face was such as we figure for one of the fathers of the Christian church,—ere knowledge had warmed into controversy, and ere meekness had forfeited its place among prelatic virtues. As Mr. O'Daly rose to be formally presented to the youthful lady of the Castle, his courtesy assumed a tinge of humble lowliness, very different from the frank, jovial bluntness with which his kinsman had recognised a similar honour.

From both of these gentlemen, however, Lady Willersdale was required to withdraw her attention, in order to acknowledge the listless bow of Mr. Edwards, the third member of the group; but in his cold formal demeanour and stern aspect, she saw little to arrest her notice. By Lord Willersdale's request, the whole party was speedily seated by the breakfast table; the active interests of which, at once broke through

the restraint and embarrassment of the guests; each of whom might reasonably feel more at home in Willersdale Castle, than either its lovely hostess, or its alienated lord. The younger Daly was one of those persons in whose address the genial wish of imparting pleasure to others —the cordial frankness of an excellent disposition—more than compensates the absence of the higher graces of good breeding.

His faith was painted on his face,—

and in the persuasion that Lady Willersdale must be eagerly interested in all the details of her husband's estate, in the recent changes of its principal tenants, and the general promise of society afforded by the neighbourhood at large, his *bonhommie* found ample themes wherewith to entertain the attentive Helen. On the latter head, notwithstanding the eloquence inspired by his partiality towards his native county, little could be elicited that was favourable towards her prospects of society during the winter months.

"There was Sir William O'Gorman's family settled at the Priory; but then the roads were so bad as to be impassable after the first autumnal rains. There was Lady Theodosia Mitford, at Mitford Lodge, when the weather would admit of the ferry. Lord Muntingford frequently passed the winter at Muntingford Castle; but there were reasons which rendered the ladies of the county averse to visiting there at present."

"Your accounts are really alarming," replied Helen. "If I am to rely for conversation upon the rooks who woke me so unceremoniously this morning at day-break, I shall begin to understand the value of the excellent library through which I passed last night, and which affords my forlorn hope of companionship; for Lord Willersdale has forewarned me, Mr. Daly, that his time for six weeks to come is to be devoted to yourself."

"So much the better—so much the better," exclaimed the gratified agent, unceremoniously

rubbing his hands. "I was fearing, my lord, from the lamentations of the newspapers, that we should find you too much of an invalid for business. But thank God, you are here, and looking almost yourself; and since you are so good as to promise me your early attention, there are many new points which I flatter myself are worthy your attention, and concerning which I shall wait your further instructions."

"No, no, Daly," replied Lord Willersdale, "do not hope to entrap me into business; believe me, I have earned my holidays as well as the most diligent schoolboy of them all. I wish to be a spectator only for the present; a deeply interested and gratified spectator of all you have effected for me. Paring turnips in my Sabine farm must be the most laborious occupation enforced upon me."

"Turnips, my lord!" said the mystified agent, to whom Mr. Edwards's quotations habitually assumed the tone of an enigma. "Since the introduction of mangel-wurzel on

the estate, I can persuade no one but old Malony to stick to the Swedes."

Lord Willersdale was puzzled in his turn; when Mr. O'Daly, who had been conversing in a low voice with his brother divine, on some question of parochial infringement, came to his assistance with an inquiry touching a leading topic of Continental politics, that speedily engrossed the attention of Mr. Edwards and his noble host; leaving Daly to return to his meagre catalogue of the available society within a morning's drive of Willersdale Castle.

"Mrs. Daly will make it an early duty to acquaint your ladyship with all these particulars. Daly House, I am happy to say, is scarcely beyond the limit of a walk; and you will find in my wife, Lady Willersdale, a countrywoman of your own, and one who will be anxious on every occasion to accept the favour of your company when lonesome."

Helen received this satisfactory assurance with becoming gratitude.

"Indeed, with the exception of Lady Theodosia Mitford, I can scarcely point out another lady of this immediate country likely to obtain the honour of your friendship. Lord Willersdale promises me his company through the plantations this morning; and I heard Mrs. Daly order the horse to be put under the carriage immediately after breakfast to——"

"*Under* the carriage!" exclaimed Helen, with a look of horror and commiseration.

"Under the carriage; where else?" replied the agent, involuntarily smiling at the simplicity of the London beauty. "And I fancy that will be the car itself coming along the grove road. I would know its jingle against any other in the county."

A sonorous clang of the hall bell warned Lady Willersdale and the gentlemen to the drawing room, in honour of the promised guest.

CHAPTER III.

I am not one who much or oft delight
To season my fireside with personal talk,
Of friends, who live within an easy walk,
Or neighbours, daily, weekly, in my sight.
Better than such discourse does silence—long,
Long, barren silence—square with my desire.
Wordsworth.

The gossiping reminiscences of this old dowager world of ours sufficiently avail to prove, that from the days of Jupiter the thunderer, to those of Mr. Daly of Daly House, the wisest and greatest of the male generation have been tempted to lay aside the attributes of their superiority, under the influence of a tender susceptibility

Mr. Daly was a man of undoubted judgment in all matters of minor legislation, of agricul-

ture, or horticulture; a very Ricardo in financial economy—a very Evelyn in the Sylva of Ireland; a man in short of plain sense and unaffected manners. Yet, under the excitation of a Bath ball, he had introduced into the coregency of Daly House, a lady as little qualified to amend the solitude of its fireside as could have been imagined by the most daring imagination.

Lady Willersdale's countrywoman and promised friend, was the daughter of an opulent coach contractor, who had retired from Bristol to the dignified ease of a substantial country-house on the borders of Wales. One of the professed objects of his industry had been to make what he called ladies and gentlemen of his children; on which hint his ambitious offspring improving in their turn, resolved themselves into *fine* ladies and *fine* gentlemen. The heir-apparent had bought his way in a dragoon regiment, where the length of his spurs and mustachios had rendered him the Lovelace of the

feminine mob, in all those cities of the United Kingdom favoured by government with the inestimable benefit of cavalry barracks. His two fair sisters, meanwhile, were neck and neck with the hero of the Sabretache, in his race of vanity and absurdity.

The Miss Smiths,—or, as they more correctly united their somewhat universal patronymic into its elegant plural,—the Misses Smith, had been gradually drilled into refinement by all the pride, pomp, and circumstance of a Bath boarding school on the fashionable heights of Lansdowne. Furthered by the aspiring views of their anti-attritious sire, who professed himself anxious that they should run well in hand, and show good points in harness, they had been endowed with all the wit, learning, and accomplishments there to be purchased, at the rate of so much per annum. The list of Mrs. Daly's mental qualifications might have vied with the most stoutly-worded governess-advertisement that ever graced Mr. Hatchard's counter; from

"geography and the use of the globes," up to "the harp with its finishing graces," and "Italian with the Roman accent;" and when she returned at seventeen with her certificate of perfection to the paternal residence, even old Smith himself was satisfied that such *entrechats*, such quavering, and such a confusion of tongues had never before enlightened the principality of Wales.

The Misses Smith were moved to their first blush by the vociferous approbation of their sire; but they had profited too deeply by their Bath education to have any taste for blushing *unseen;* and on finding that their mountainous neighbourhood afforded neither materials for a ball, nor hopes of matrimony, they tormented their father into a fit of the gout, which rendered a Bath winter indispensable. With abundance of money, and time, and folly on their hands, they continued to flirt through as many balls, incur as many milliners' bills, and distinguish themselves by as much vulgar pretension,

as was ever boasted by any of their name throughout its unimaginable varieties. The Misses Smith were pronounced to be "fine dashing girls;" "fascinating creatures;" and "quite the thing," by all the half-pay officers and vacation clerks, who bestowed their tediousness and their cigars on the atmosphere of Milsom Street. Unhappy Marcus Daly, of Daly House! what evil genius prompted him at such a crisis, to disembark at Bristol on a county mission to a committee of his Majesty's lower house?—What blamable remissness in his country's cause permitted him to diverge from his road, in order incidentally to unbend his mind in the hubbub of the pump-room, and the *levée en masse* of a master of the ceremonies' ball!

During the melancholy fortnight whose peremptory duties detained him in the city of Westminster, his wandering thoughts were unceasingly reverted towards the city of the West; towards those illuminated halls which had wit-

nessed his introduction to Miss Felicia Smith; whose fair ringlets, and fairer complexion seemed to spread a sunny radiance upon the hieroglyphical parchment—the fatal inclosure bill—which had compelled him from the banks of the Shannon. He, whose slumbers had heretofore emulated those of the somnolent seven, became a dreamer of dreams. He, whose humble prose had never been remarkable for its manuscript fluency, now

Soared to verse, and moralized in rhyme;

and saving that neither Smith nor Felicia were appellatives sufficiently euphonious to propitiate the nine foolish virgins, it is probable that he would have perpetrated a sonnet worthy the notice of some eminent magazine.

His formal declaration—which followed the second ball of his second visit to the splendid city—was framed, however, in the most matter of fact prose; since it included the pedigree of the House of Daly, the ground plan of Daly House,

and a very arithmetical enumeration of the quarterly revenues of its owner. Moreover his fine, open, manly countenance wore so becoming a grace as he industriously pulled up his new top boots during his pause for a reply, that the accomplished Felicia abated a thousand per annum, and a baronetcy of her pristine expectations, in favour of his personal merit. Her younger sister had just accepted the hand of a Colonel O'Shaughnessy of the Youghal militia; and the occasion of a simultaneous wedding was not to be neglected.

In fine, old Smith bestowed his benediction, fifteen thousand pounds, and a hearty slap upon the back, on a son-in-law who, like the critics, had "vast ideas of corn;" the double bridal of the Misses Smith became the cause of a tremendous rise in white satin; and Marcus Daly had the good fortune of transferring into his respectable family and comfortable home, an ill-born, ill-bred, supercilious ninny, with a sufficiently pretty face, and a sum of 21,943*l.* stock in the 3 per

cents. Of these good gifts, the latter had proved some serious augmentation, and the former an inevitable and grievous diminution during the twenty years which had seen the lovely Felicia repiningly immured in the solitudes of her adopted country. In addition to her original epithet of "fair," Mrs. Daly might now claim those of "fat, and forty;" and as her youthful influence over her good-humoured husband had sufficiently outlived its first incentives to secure her the welcome relaxation of a perennial visit to Bath—where a young Felicia was in training to rival her much accomplished mamma —she still contrived to astonish the unsophisticated natives of Galway, by a display of modish extravagance such as the city of the west alone can furnish. The excellent Marcus had both tact and taste sufficient to remonstrate at first against these misplaced exhibitions; but the pathetic representations made by the lady, of her melancholy estrangement from her friends, and exile from her native country, worked upon

his forbearance to leave her to the one harmless consolation in which she had sought refuge from her woes. Her most favourite grievances in such altercations, were the non-residence of the Willersdale family, whose future society he had held out among the temptations of Daly House, in his courtship of the Bath heiress;—and the recent marriage of his elder brother, to whom as head of the house, she had always intended her own son to succeed. But these two lamented circumstances were in truth her secret sources of exultation; since, by the absence of the Willersdales, "Madam Daly" obtained a sort of representative dignity in the second-rate coteries of the neighbourhood; and by the marriage of Sir William Daly, she had secured *a Lady Maria* for a sister-in-law; to be paraded over in her epistolary communications with her Bath gossips, and with Mrs. O'Shaughnessy of the Youghal militia.

Such was the promising neighbour whose bright blue pelisse and nodding plumes had

prepared themselves to produce an overwhelming impression upon Lady Willersdale on their first interview; while a profusion of pendent flaxen ringlets, a complexion heightened into flaming brilliancy by the searching keenness of a brisk autumnal breeze, and a reticule embroidered in orange lilies by the expert hand of the juvenile Felicia, formed a combination of hues somewhat more than dazzling to the eye. The address of Mrs. Daly, meanwhile, did ample justice to her external promise; her simpering courtesies seemed almost intended to do the honours of the castle to its beautiful mistress; while her sympathy with the untoward destiny which had brought Lady Willersdale to reside in her lord's half civilized country, and in his own deplorable mansion, was unbounded.

"As a countrywoman of your la'ship's I can feel for you; for re'lly, Me'em, when one has been accustomed to the first society, and to the pleasures of fashionable life in England, the

odious ways of this place are absolutely unendurable. Since my banishment to the solitude of Daly House, Mr. D.'s avocations have left me almost to myself; thank God! I have resources which, as the poets say,

Can add a feather to the wings of time.

But I can assure your la'ship I have had much to put up with in settling in Ireland."

"I have heard Lord Willersdale mention your children; you must find their education a great amusement."

"Lord Willersdale is very flattering to mention them as *children;* but really, Me'em, I blush to think of their age! Such great tall creatures positively make one reflect on what the poets call 'the lapse of time.' My Felicia, Me'em, can look over her Papa's shoulder; and under such circumstances I think your ladyship will feel with me that Daly House is no place for the acquirement of the graces. So at my last visit to my native country I thought it my duty

to leave her at a first-rate finishing school in Bath."

"You must have felt the sacrifice of her society very severely."

"Ah! Lady Willersdale!—a mother's feelings!—But, as I said before, I thank Heaven I have resources within myself!—Indeed I cannot but congratulate myself on the heroism which induced me to resign my Felicia's society, for I understand she is Pucittà's favourite scholar,—is divine on the guitar;—and when your ladyship shall do me the favour to honour Daly House with a visit, I think I can show you some specimens of Poonah which will amaze you."

"Specimens of Poonah?—is it a mineral?"

"*Of Poonah work*, and oriental tinting, which I find have quite superseded sketching and drawing in modern education."

Lady Willersdale was ashamed to avow her ignorance. "But during the absence of Miss Daly, you must have found the society of the

neighbourhood very acceptable. The Daly family I understand are resident in the county."

"At a distance of nearly forty miles. But I have little to regret in Castle Daly. Your ladyship will be astonished to perceive the general want of refinement in all those old-fashioned Irish houses. The Dalys are respectable people,—very respectable people; but Lord! Me'em—they have no more notion of life!—As to Sir William, he is a mere fox hunter;—and Lady Maria—your la'ship is aware that my brother-in-law is recently married,—Lady Maria Daly is one of the "new light" school; one of the *gasometers*, as my poor dear father used to call them."

"But you have the Mitford family within reach of a morning visit; and I understand from Mr. Daly that Lady Theodosia is a very superior person."

"Yes! that is just Mr. D.'s word! Lady Theodosia *is* a very superior woman; so superior that she scarcely finds it worth while to

converse with females of moderate abilities,—like myself or your la'ship; she gets on very well with Daly, because they have always so much to discuss respecting the state of the country; I believe they keep a catalogue of every pauper in the district. The General's nephew, who is looked upon as his heir, is at college with my son William, and they often make their journies from Dublin together for neighbourhood's sake. But for my own part I see no great things in Henry Mitford; and between you and me, Lady Willersdale, I suspect we shall see him disgrace himself one of these days."

"I trust not;" replied Lady Willersdale, "for the General is an old and very esteemed friend of Willersdale's. And Mr. Edwards,—the rectory appears to be situated between the Castle and Daly House,—you probably see a great deal of Mr. Edwards?"

"And *hear* very little," replied the caustic Felicia, simpering at her own wit. "Mr.

Edwards, Me'em, is the most silent, unsociable person with whom it was ever my fortune to come in contact;—no knowledge of the world,—a mere bookworm;—and if it were not that Mr. D. entertains a very high respect for him, and that I hold it the duty of every family of consideration to show their utmost patronage to the ministers of the Gospel, I really don't think, Lady Willersdale, I should have courage to invite such a piece of solemnity within the walls of Daly House as long as I live."

"I understand Mr. Edwards is a very eminent scholar; and that he has united most actively with Mr. Daly in his efforts for the improvement of the Willersdale tenantry."

"So Daly chooses to fancy; but I must say for Mr. D. that he is always for throwing the reputation of his own good deeds upon any one's shoulders who may choose to accept it."

Lady Willersdale who had now exhausted every topic on which to provoke the loquacity of her guest, and who was any thing but capti-

vated by the tone of her mind and manners, began to wonder when it would suit Mrs. Daly of Daly House to "order the horses put under her carriage" again. But it was some time since the fair Felicia had experienced so favourable an opportunity of venting her sarcasms upon those neighbours who, being altogether strangers to her companion, were secure from defence. Helen's gentle disposition and elegant mind recoiled from the paltry details of mere vulgar scandal. She had been accustomed to her sister Lilfield's peculiar art of *hinting* away a character; and to Lady Danvers's arrowy shafts of malice, which could glance from object to object like the lurid light of a meteor, sporting and playing upon the spot it blasts with desolation. But these had been moderated by good breeding, or masqued by the varnish of wit;—detraction, in its foul and frightful nakedness had never yet shocked her eye. To escape therefore from some further confidences with which the agent's malicious wife was

proceeding to irritate her prejudices against the unsociable pastor of the parish, Lady Willersdale proposed to her visitor to accompany her on her first inspection of the Castle; for which purpose old Mrs. O'Mahoney, the housekeeper, had been appointed to be in waiting after breakfast; a plan which, as it appeared some slight advance towards friendly familiarity, was cordially accepted. Mrs. Daly seemed anxious, however, to dispense with O'Mahoney's society on the occasion; assuring Lady Willersdale she had brought so many parties of her own to view the Castle, and was so much at home in every nook and corner, that her sole guidance might suffice.

"Oh! we will by no means deprive the old lady of a privilege of which she is probably tenacious. Besides she is a very ancient servant of the family,—Lady Danvers's nurse if I recollect; and I would not mortify her feelings for the world."

This was a degree of delicacy extremely

puzzling to Mrs. Daly, who was accustomed to judge the relative position of mistress and maid by her own with regard to the Bettys and Sallys of Daly House. But when Vernon ushered in the starch old housekeeper, with her plaited lawn pinners, and high-heeled shoes, it was evident that Mrs. O'Mahoney regarded "Madam Daly," the agent's wife, with a very reciprocal degree of contempt.

"I hope, O'Mahoney," observed the lady of the blue pelisse, in an audible whisper as they crossed the hall, "I hope you were not much inconvenienced about the breakfast or the provisioning. Being taken unawares, I desired my people would send up game, and poultry, and pastry, till the arrival of the establishment."

"I had all things wanting from the rectory last night; and my lard's foreign cook has been at work since the morn's morn; so all favours have been duly returned to the agency;—no offence, Mrs. Daly, Madam," replied the housekeeper with a side glance of scorn.

"Oh! Miss Dudley was no doubt well able to supply the Castle," said Mrs. Daly spitefully; and she hastened to cover her discomposure by pointing out with affected rapture to Lady Willersdale, the carved oaken panels and balustrade decorating the great staircase.

Mistress O'Mahoney had presided too long, and with too undisputed sway, over the domestic arrangements of Willersdale Castle, to feel any peculiar satisfaction at the unexpected prospect of resigning her *bâton* of office to any among the posse comitatis of stewards, grooms of the chambers, and *chefs de cuisine*, which had suddenly alighted, like a flight of birds of prey upon the demesne. At his last visit, Lord Willersdale had arrived *en garçon*, with a solitary valet; and the old lady's cares had been unbounded, to supply in her own person the deficiencies of his household. Adoring her master, to whom her attendance had been devoted in his early youth, the favourite dream of

her monotonous existence, had been to see him settled in the "ould castle, keeping state and grace like the ould ancient lards before him;" with an Irish wife, and an abundant growth of Irish olive branches; with Irish servants, Irish hospitality, and Irish disorder in all its varieties. She had scarcely yet recovered the shock of her disappointment on learning of his marriage with a "slip of an English girl;" and in her spleen she had attributed the subsequent disaster of the duel, the tidings of which had created a most tumultuous sensation in Ireland, to the same calamitous source. But Lord Willersdale's last offence had been still more unpardonable. To steal upon them, as she said, like a thief in the night, without so much as a bit of a word to bid the boys be in readiness, or the rooms aired, or a bite and sup in preparation for the horde of greedy English they had brought down on the castle, was a derogation from the ancient customs of the family, and a beggarly disgrace in the eyes of the whole country.

It may be imagined, therefore, that the old

lady who belonged to that primitive and peremptory species of hereditary domestics, extinct in England since the abdication of the far-famed matron of Warwick Castle—was tempted to look upon her youthful mistress with no very partial predilection. Her experience of English females had been confined to her former nursling, lady Danvers, whose levity of conduct during her residence in Ireland, had sufficiently discredited the name; and to "Madam Daly," whose officious vulgarity made itself visible, even to the most unpractised judgment. Generalizing from these instances, Mrs. O'Mahoney, and her subordinates of the castle, had predetermined that the English Lady Willersdale would prove a cold-hearted, haughty, flaunting, "Madam;" a "parsecutor," and a "cru'l fine lady."

Perhaps it was fortunate for Helen's future popularity that her *début* was favoured by the contrast of Mrs. Daly's gorgeous presence; her girlish simplicity of appearance, her plain white dress, and unornamented hair; and

above all, her gentle voice and modest address, half conquered the prejudiced but warm heart of the old family housekeeper on this very first occasion of addressing her "out of the face." Before they had attained a third of the length of the picture-gallery,—the head-quarters of Mrs. O'Mahoney's illustrative declamations, —she had determined on the strength of Lady Willersdale's gracious attention, and utter insensibility to Madam Daly's interruptions and notes explanatory, that the new mistress of the castle was the "rale lady after all."

"Now pray let me beg your la'ship to admire the Irish notions of comfort," exclaimed the agent's wife, leading the way through a suite of dismantled bed-rooms. "Not a carpet, and scarcely a piece of furniture, to be seen; now this is just the style of Castle Daly, and half of what are called the family mansions in this neighbourhood;—no signs of either comfort or decency."

"You must remember that Willersdale has been almost uninhabited for the last sixty years;

the castle remains in the state which I fancy prevailed in most English mansion-houses at that period. At Mordaunt Park, our nursery *suite*, which had not been renovated for years, exactly resembled this; and I feel that I shall attach myself to these half-furnished chambers, for they carry me back to the scenes of my childhood."

O'Mahoney made a low and reverential curtsey, as if she had received a personal compliment. "This shute of chambers, my lady, which is called my Lady Rachael's shute, was judged good and fine eno' any way for the Duke of Ormond's daughter—and was not she my late Lady Willersdale but one before the last?"

Helen nodded good-humouredly in acquiescence, but without precisely comprehending these ramifications of the family tree.

"Re'lly," resumed Mrs. Daly, "the luxury of furnishing is carried to such a pitch now-a-days, one scarcely knows where one's wants may stop. The last time I was in Bath, Me'em, I fitted up the blue chintz north-west bed-room of

Daly House from a fashionable warehouse; and even the coal-scuttle was in the shape of an obelisk. Pray, Lady Willersdale, when were you last in Bath?"

"I have never yet had that pleasure."

"Now re'lly!—Then permit me to assure you, Me'em, that you can have very little notion of the improvements they have introduced of late years into the furnishing department. You would be amazed at the style of their first-rate houses."

"Very likely," replied Helen with a smile, "for I am strangely unobservant of such matters in general. With an airy room and a comfortable bed, I care very little for the design of the coalscuttle."

Mrs. O'Mahoney's admiration now advanced to the cordial degree of inquiring whether her ladyship had rested well—and what alterations of her apartment would render it more to her liking?—And while Lady Willersdale enchanted the old creature by her gracious replies, Madam Daly followed them with a secret exclamation

of "One might see she had never been in Bath by the cut of her gown."

They were now standing in the centre of a capacious but cheerless looking library; smelling of mouldy parchment and damp leather, in the same aromatic degree of obsolete scholarship that pervades the very spectral-looking book-room of St. Paul's cathedral.

"We call this Mr. Edwards's chamber, my lady; and here are some of Miss Dudley's drawings still on the table. Sure she's a great scholar of her years; and passes a mort o' time in the ould library, sarching through they cumbersome books."

"Miss Dudley?" inquired Lady Willersdale, taking up some masterly etchings which lay beside the edition of Montfaucon from which they had been admirably copied. "The same whom you mentioned as having painted a miniature from one of the family portraits in the gallery?"

"The same, my lady. Sure who else but Miss Florence?"

"And who is this Miss Florence?"

"Sure who else but Mr. Edwards's young lady."

"Mr. Edwards's young lady!" reiterated Helen, looking towards Mrs. Daly for some further explanation, and still examining the drawings.

"Nay, Me'em—it is exactly as O'Mahoney relates. That is all we know of Miss Florence Dudley."

"A niece of Mr. Edwards?" persisted Lady Willersdale, blushing for her own curiosity.

Mrs. Daly was beginning her reply with a most significant curl of the lip, when the housekeeper, who was standing near a window commanding the river, uttered a vehement exclamation.

"Well then, the saints be praised! if there isn't the Mitford barge at the landing stairs, and the gineral shaking hands with my Lard; and my Lady Theodosy,—the rale lady though English born. And sure, my lady, if it's any thing ye'll be wanting to hear of Miss Florence, God

bless her!—it's of herself—that's Lady Theodosy, ye should be axing—who loves her like a mother—no less, I'll ingage." And it was plain to perceive that the feelings of the pertinacious old matron were deeply interested in the question.

"I believe we had better return to the drawing-room," said Helen, moving rapidly from the window. "I perceive Lady Theodosia and the General are coming with Lord Willersdale towards the house."

Mrs. Daly, between whom and the inhabitants of Mitford Lodge there existed a very positive degree of moral antipathy, seized on the opportunity to make her precipitate adieus, and a retreat that was far from unacceptable; and as Lady Willersdale, relieved from her companionship, was recrossing the great hall towards the reception rooms, she was met by her lord, in animated and friendly conversation with her new guests. The introduction was over in a moment; and there was a character of frankness and good-will in the *abord* of Lady Theo-

dosia, which might have rendered it almost superfluous.

"We were coming, Lady Willersdale, to seek you," said she with a cheerful smile. "When I learned from Lord Willersdale in what an interesting survey you were occupied, I could not bear to thwart a curiosity which, were I in your place, would be quite a torment to me. Mitford declares that I cannot rest in a house of which I have not ascertained every ghost-hole and trap-door."

"Apparently this venerable mansion would deprive you of a week's sleep," replied Helen, leading the way into the saloon. "I never saw a house more perplexed by impossible intricacies."

"Oh! that is part of our Irish system," said Lady Theodosia. "We despise the common-place method of going straight to a point, which affords no exercise to the understanding. The round-about mode of management prevails through all our domestic arrangements. For instance—were I inclined to betray my country,

and to tell you through what an infinity of mouths, and across what a circumbendibus of our mother earth, the news of the arrival of the family at Willersdale was telegraphed to Milford Lodge—although one of your rooks might have cawed it to us in five minutes across the river—I think I should amaze you."

"I can find nothing to blame in the manner of the act," said Lady Willersdale courteously, "since it procures me the pleasure of seeing you so shortly after our very unexpected visit. Lord Willersdale has frequently represented to me the vicinity of the castle to Mitford Lodge, as one of its great advantages in his eyes."

"I wish he had more frequently made it apparent to ourselves; I have a terrible grudge against him, as one of the most determined of our absentees," replied Theodosia, looking after Lord W. who had retired in earnest conversation with the General towards a book-room, opening into the saloon. "And pray admire what unknightly practices Lord Willersdale is already introducing into the land! However, we

must forgive them. Mitford is his old schoolfellow—a friend of thirty years standing; and they have innumerable reminiscences together whenever they meet. Just now too that Lord Willersdale is our *héros par excellence*, (for we have been fighting his duel o'er again for six weeks past,) it is but reasonable to give the poor General a moment for his private inquiries."

"*Un héros en retraite!*" said Helen. "We are come among you, Lady Theodosia, in disgrace: a calamity to which nothing could so well have reconciled me as a visit to Ireland."

"To own the truth,—and I must confess myself a sorry politician, since the only party distinction I can ever bring myself to understand is that of the *ins* and the *outs*—the sunshine and the shade,—to say the truth, I found myself the sole person in this country to whom the news of Lord Willersdale's resignation proved a matter of satisfaction. I have an unfailing trust in the virtues of my sex: and from the moment I heard of his marriage, I have said to myself '*Du courage!*' Lady Willers-

dale will bring him to Ireland; and Mitford will perhaps have his old and dear friend settled at the castle at last. I have since—forgive my impertinence—heard so much of yourself from one of the persons dearest to me in the world, as to learn to desire this for my own sake." But no sooner did the intelligence reach Galway of the dissolution of the ministry, than I dismissed all my fears on the subject. Rescued from the conspiracy of king, lords, and commons, I felt persuaded that your influence would prevail in our favour; and I can scarcely sufficiently exult in the justification of my presentiments."

"*There* at least I can sympathize with you," said Helen, insensibly flattered by the friendliness of Lady Theodosia's manners.

Lady Theodosia Mitford was a person whose striking charm consisted in the absence of affectation. It was evident from all her words, and all her actions, that *self* had little share in their prompting. She was tall, and rather distinguished in her air; but with no better pretensions to beauty, than those of

an open animated countenance; or to wit, than the liveliness of a happy temperament, modified by the instigations of a correct understanding. The over-refinement of the exclusives might have found something to blame in a frankness of address, often amounting to *brusquerie;* yet it was any thing rather than ill-breeding, and arose partly from the necessity she had been under, in earlier life, of associating herself in the difficulties of a military career, remote from female society of her own rank; and still more, from a reliance upon her own motives and intentions, rendering her somewhat indifferent to the opinion of the world.

That world, however, like many a human being satiated by adulation, is apt to cast its favour on those most regardless of the treasure; and Lady Theodosia, *bon gré mal gré,* was astonished to find herself one of its most popular members. But it was not, as in the instance of Lady Danvers, the surface of her character which served to captivate the suffrage of society. She was known to be a woman of sterling prin-

ciples—of unimpeachable conduct, and strictly attached to the performance of every duty of her station; and this without one single deteriorative shadow of pharisaical self-esteem. Towards Helen, however, she both felt and spoke with something of a maternal tone of superiority; for she had attained that *certain* or uncertain age, which allowed her the privilege and advantage of twenty years' experience beyond that of her lovely hostess.

"And you will not inquire of me, Lady Willersdale, from whom I have received my excellent information respecting my future neighbour?"

"Pray believe that nothing but my extreme modesty has suppressed the natural foible of my sex. I am not the less anxious to learn the name of this mysterious sponsor for my virtues."

"My brother, Lord Barton, has, I believe, the happiness to be well acquainted with you."

Lady Willersdale coloured deeply at the

sound of Lord Barton's name; for she had lately learned to associate it with the first and only warning she had received in the course of her brief career of folly and dissipation.

"As he is not here to reject my claim," she replied, "you must allow me to call Lord Barton my *friend*. Your relationship, of which I have been hitherto ignorant, gives me renewed hopes of the advantage I may derive from my residence at Willersdale. But to show you, Lady Theodosia, how grievously you wrong me in believing me destitute of womanly curiosity," continued Helen, eagerly turning from an embarrassing subject, "pray be kind enough to satisfy me on a point which Mrs. Daly was on the eve of expounding to me at the very moment of your arrival. Who is 'Mr. Edwards's young lady?'"

"My interruption was better timed than I could have imagined. Mrs. Daly is the last person to whom I should have wished you to be indebted for your insight into the matter; while *I*, alas! have neither a son nor a daughter

to distort my jealous views concerning poor Florence Dudley."

"My old housekeeper, indeed, referred me to yourself for the best information."

"Good old O'Mahoney! she has done us both justice. But to acknowledge the truth, my dear Lady Willersdale, this young lady of Mr. Edwards's is our mystery of mysteries; '*nul mortel n'a levé son voile.*' She is an Isis, or a veiled prophetess, or what you please; for not one soul throughout the neighbourhood—from Mitford, who is his esteemed and affectionate friend, to Mrs. Daly herself, whose effrontery is a crime of no ordinary dye,—has ever presumed to interrogate poor Edwards concerning his ward—niece—or natural daughter, whichever she may chance to be. Mr. Edwards's excellent character insures her the respect of every class; and her own admirable qualities our whole affection. She is a sort of wild Irish muse, exquisitely beautiful, and miraculously accomplished."

"I wonder why Mr. Edwards denied me the

pleasure of seeing her this morning. He had no right to visit us alone."

"I am persuaded that little Florence will never arrive at the Castle, unless by your own especial invitation. It is his mania to rate her claims too modestly. But if you will do me the favour of permitting me to accompany you some morning to the Rectory, you will greatly flatter us all three; and insure yourself, unless I am much mistaken, a very agreeable surprise."

"Let it be fixed for your first idle day," replied Helen, eagerly.

"Let it be fixed for to-morrow, if I am not too importunate. My first thought on learning the arrival of my brother's Phœnix, was to congratulate *myself;* my next was to exult in the advantages her kindness might extend to Florence Dudley."

Lady Willersdale's reply was prevented by the entrance of Vernon, announcing luncheon; which was closely followed by the re-appearance of the General and his host. A meal of any

description, is a domestic crisis which alone appears to justify, in Great Britain, the re-union of the sexes. An Englishman generally feels himself to be *de trop* in the society of females, unless eating is going forward. Fortunately it is an event of pretty frequent recurrence, especially in the *désœuvrement* of a country life.

CHAPTER IV.

Combien d'hommes resemblent à ces arbres, déjà forts et avancés, que l'on transplante dans les jardins, où ils surprennent les yeux de ceux qui les voient placés dans de beaux endroits où ils ne les ont point vu croître; et qui ne connoissent ni leurs commencemens, ni leurs progrès.—*La Bruyère*.

Such of my readers as are endowed with sympathizing hearts, may possibly have been tempted to regard with interest the cruel dilemma of the excellent lady of Beech Park. Defrauded of her race-week festivities, and that by the rash indiscretion of a brother-in-law who, notwithstanding Lady Lilfield's predictions, had not thought proper to die after all,—her ladyship looked upon Helen's precipitate and unannounced departure for Ireland, as a determined and unpardonable infringement upon her rights.

She had so fully resolved upon securing a visit from the ex-minister and his bride in the course of the autumn, and upon parading "my brother and sister Willersdale," to all the county grandees, that she considered their escape as a nefarious proceeding.

In short, she had been ill-used throughout the business. Her younger sister had made a splendid match without her interference; Fern Wood having thereby acquired a very undue degree of importance in the eyes of the elders of the family. And now, before she had found a single opportunity to plume herself in the honours of the connexion,—before she had been permitted to exhibit the subordinate glories of Beech Park, with its central schools, and infant schools,—its steam conservatory, and oak-leaf pinery to the approval of Lord Willersdale, the family had sneaked over to its Irish estates; without so much as deigning to recognize her attention in postponing the race-week party, with its fine lively turtle, and London cook.

Nor was this all. Not only had Lord Willersdale basely deserted his post on the Treasury bench without the smallest regard to the feelings of Beech Park, but he had ceded his ministerial honours to the house of Delvile; in order that his Grace, to whom the Cinque Ports and their castle afforded greater promise of novelty than his well-worn halls in the county of Durham, might still further encroach upon the apportioned pleasures of Sir Robert and Lady Lilfield, by leaving Delvile Castle a desart during its ordinary season of hospitality. No public days—no private dinners—no snug parties staying in the house, whose separate and several *liaisons* were wont to keep "my daughter Lilfield's" observation in a nervous tremour during the whole of her visit—no retail edition of London scandal—no tarnished revivification of London fashions—no opportunity to Tartuffize with the ladies of the Dean and Chapter, over her horrific discoveries at the castle! Lady Lilfield's occupation was gone!

Her only consolation was, that Sir Stephen

and Lady Mordaunt were gone too! Before the close of the stipulated three weeks, she had begun to discover that the latter meddled in her schools, and gave advice to her head nurse; and that the former was growing prosy at the commencement of a second bottle of claret. Nor did the filial piety of the best of daughters prevent her from hazarding sundry inquiries touching the date of her mother's annual visit to her grandfather, General Forbes, whom Lady Mordaunt generally managed to accompany with thrifty assiduity to some southern bathing-place;—"it was only taking rather a larger house, and her good father was too much advanced in years to leave home alone in safety." Lady Lilfield even ventured to hint that it was getting very late for Weymouth—their destination for the present season. On this hint, howbeit she spake not, Lady Mordaunt quickened her movements towards the General's residence in Hampshire; but not without touching at Mordaunt Park in the course of her voyage. It was necessary to deposit Sir Stephen for the

benefit of the county sessions and an approaching rent-day; and expedient to take up "poor Jane," who had weak eyes and tender health; and who was always kindly invited by her grandfather to participate in the benefits of his sea bathing.

How little had "my daughter Lilfield," as she watched, with Tullia-like exultation, the departing wheels of the Mordaunt chariot, conjectured that they were rolling onwards towards a new family triumph!—how little imagined that her fame was about to be redeemed by an involuntary share in its organization;—how little dreamed, in furnishing Lady Mordaunt's reticule with a small triangular despatch on blue satin paper, to a certain Mrs. Forsyth, who was likely to be found at Weymouth, that she was conferring upon her the inestimable benefit of ridding her of another daughter!—even of that "poor Jane," who was about to become "dear Jane" in the Mordaunt family, for the remainder of her sickly days! Virtue is not always limited to become its own reward; Lady Lilfield's

recompense was great, both in the gratitude of her parents, and in a considerable accession of personal importance.

Not to enter into the details of so hopeless a catastrophe as a courtship between a very stupid man and a very ugly girl, I shall proceed to favour my readers with the confidential view of an epistle addressed by Jack Mordaunt, the guardsman,—who has, hitherto, figured but scantily in the family annals,—to Lady Willersdale, his favourite sister.

"*Weymouth, Oct.* 18.

"Dear Helen;

"My mother requests me to announce to you a remarkable family event. Did such occur every day, I should write oftener; but you know me of old, as the worst of correspondents. Notwithstanding this, I am enough of a complete letter-writer to know that a valuable branch of the art consists in flinging off as far as possible from the main point. I shall therefore begin with myself, who am a mere spectator of the plot in question.

"I arrived here, after a six-months' sleep at Plymouth, such as would have made a dormouse snore—a total extinction ghostly and bodily. I found the old General a year younger than on my last visit; and not much more than half fretted into a fit of the jaundice by my mother's usual manœuvrings, which he can discern through all his dotage. He has not yet, however, been able to comprehend your marriage, and misses the kind attentions you used to show him. After looking through his spectacles at Jane for a Shrewsbury-clock hour, he muttered to me, the other day, 'Your sister Helen grows confoundedly ugly; I never perceived last year, Jack, that she had red hair!'

"Yet in spite of her red hair, and in spite of her insipidity,—for there is not such another dumbmy extant,—*Jane*, my dear Helen, Jane the non-entity, is the heroine of my remarkable event. To use my mother's jargon, 'poor Jane has picked up as good a match as any of her sisters.' Your's, you know, was called a good match—but advantages are comparative; Jane's

Mr. Montagu Forsyth is as worthy of *her*, as I believe my little Helen to be of a Lord Willersdale. By the way,—and this in a parenthesis,—pray make my brotherly good-will acceptable to him, now that he has turned his back on Downing Street: my civilities have only been retarded by an accidental discovery of the governor's dirty application for his interest, about my company. I am now free to profess my satisfaction in the prospects of your marriage. But to return to Jane's—a case more immediately in point.

"The young gentleman who has so kindly consented to disencumber my father and mother of their fourth and frightful daughter, is a heavy, good-looking fellow of five-and-twenty; belonging to one of those Scotch merchandizing families who grub their way upwards from some lane in the city, to a Baronetage, and a seat in the House. His father is of the description of monied men, whose names perpetually stare at one from the lists of India Directors, Bank Directors, Insurance Offices (capital, one million

sterling), and subscriptions for Spanish refugees. He lives in Harley Street, drives a phaeton with red wheels, and gives his heir apparent—Jane's infatuated adorer—five thousand a-year. Poor dear stupid Jane! I trust my mother may not toady her to death before her wedding day!

"All the Forsyths are here—in my opinion a set of vulgar tuft-hunting people. But instead of going to church at Weymouth, and getting over the marriage ceremony of two such uninteresting individuals as soon and as unostentatiously as possible, the whole tribe is to be transferred to Mordaunt Park, with the *éclat* of a special licence. Like other self-existents whose grandfathers remain apochryphal personages, the Forsyths are devoted worshippers of every thing like personal consequence. I wish they were all settled again in Harley Street;—but at all events I do not grudge them Jane.

"Good bye, dear Helen; avoid catching the brogue, or forgetting

Your's affectionately,

JOHN MORDAUNT."

It were unjust to the worthy family of Forsyth—forming, as they do, a specimen of one peculiar class of English nationality—to take them upon the trust of a flippant letter from a young guardsman. Jack Mordaunt was in truth an excellent fellow; but apt to look upon things in general through the eyes of his own mess and his own club.—Let us do justice to the Forsyths.

F. Senior,—or to speak it less profanely, James Forsyth, Esq. M. P.—was the head of an eminent house of business in the Barbican, and the proprietor of an excellent house of human existence in Harley Street. He was a man of great integrity, and some acuteness—of influence and consideration upon Change—a useful committee-man in the House, and one who was listened to with respect, by both sides, upon all questions of commercial interest. He had inherited a respectable patrimony from a father, who was recorded to have pedestrianized from Aberdeen to the Barbican; yet never thereafter to have

exerted his locomotive powers beyond the liberties of the city of London.

"*A père avare,*" says the proverb, "*enfant prodigue!*" But the younger Forsyth was as unlike as possible to the prodigal son; inasmuch as by his father's parsimony he was fed with husks, without having incurred that penalty by the waste of the smallest coin current in the land. On the death of his father, and his own marriage, he had however so far resolved to do violence to his feelings, and justice to his heiress-bride and ample income, as to settle himself in a substantial house in Russell Square; a spot which he regarded as the Western extremity of London, and a measure which he could scarcely reconcile to his own prudential calculations. From that hour, however, all had doubly prospered with him. Whatever hurricanes might agitate the Caribbean atmosphere,—whatever Typhoons hurl their destructive terrors on the Eastern seas,—the plantations of Forsyth & Co. seemed insured against evil, and the vessels of Forsyth &

Co. remained as true to the Docks as to their compass. *Their* bankers were infallible—*their* commodities pre-assured of a naked market; *il leur pleuvoit des ducats!*

The death of Aberdeen Forsyth having rescued the ears of his successor from the perpetual recitation of poor Richard's proverbs, a new order of things necessarily followed this unceasing flush of prosperity. Mr. F. became gradually invested with all the honours of wealth; with directorships, a borough, and a splendid mansion within five-and-twenty miles of his counting-house; while Mrs. F. who was a woman of education and lady-like address, prevailed upon him to place his sons, connexion-hunting, at Eton; and his daughters at an "establishment" in Grosvenor Place. Not but that she was aware of her more extended power of smothering them with accomplishments at home; she knew the full advantage of a *Madame la Comtesse*-governess, and of masters waiting upon their pupils in cabriolets of the Petersham build; but she had tact enough to discover

that the Forsyth dynasty was on the rise; and judged it advisable that her daughters should take no share in its connexions, till it had attained that point of the ladder of fashion on which its future visiting list might be formed with safety. Meanwhile, in the society of her husband, who was too much engrossed by his "concerns," and the concerns of his constituents, to take much thought on the pleasures of society, she was herself well content to eat through the dull and massive dinners of their brother bankers and merchants of the opulent parish of St. Pancras; to visit the winter theatres in a public box; and to seek amusement in a public concert. But these humble aspirations gradually enlarged themselves. Certain of their grandee country neighbours had alluded sneeringly in her hearing to the savage practices of Bloomsbury; and she began to feel uneasy at leaving a card bearing the reprobated locality of Russell Square, upon her Buckinghamshire neighbour, the Marchioness of C.;——as if Lady C. would have

cared had the Forsyths still pursued their humdrum existence in the Barbican itself!

Maternal solicitudes too began to mingle with her ambitious projects. Her son Montagu (he was lawfully christened *James* Montagu, and his father still at times most unforbearingly abbreviated him into *Jem*)—her son Montagu was on the move from Eton to Oxford; and her girls, who were really pretty and elegant enough to have become a more westerly parish, now required an early emancipation from the very select few among whom their grammar and history had been perfected. There was no saying how far their pleasing appearance might influence Lady C——— herself, to extend her provincial patronage into the London season; and the Lady Bettys, and Lady Sophias, with whom they had grown up to womanhood in Grosvenor Place, would assuredly continue their ardour of epistolary friendship, unless dismayed by the fatal address which must contaminate the franks of their illustrious relatives

It was not, however, by arguments such as these, that Mrs. Forsyth attempted to direct the views of her husband towards a more fashionable quarter of the town; she was too well persuaded of the excellence of his understanding, to think of dazzling his eyes with tinsel. Still less did she attempt to provoke emulation by citing the migratory intentions of his neighbour, Sir Thomas Thompson, or his stockbroker, Sir James Johnson. She simply said, "My dear James, it has long been my anxious desire to have a house in Harley Street. The Bishop of Arklow's is now on sale; it would exactly suit my wishes, and the size of our increased family; would it inconvenience you to oblige my by making the purchase?"—*My dear James*, thus persuasively and moderately addressed, made it his business to inquire into terms,—to balance the value of his disposable freehold in Russell Square; and within three months, Mrs. Forsyth was enabled to leave a new and triumphant ticket for the approbation of the fat porter of the Marchioness of C ——.

Had the "manners" of the house of Forsyth remained uninfluenced by its "honours," this simple change of residence might be regarded as a very blameless indulgence from an opulent husband to an exemplary wife. And perhaps had the worthy matron herself anticipated the altered tone about to be introduced into her peaceful household, by her aspiring daughters, she might have judged it expedient for her own tranquillity, to moderate their views by the restraint of a more obscure residence.

Old Forsyth—for alas! he was now most determinately Forsyth senior—was sensitively proud of the beauty and endowments of his daughters. His mind had been so long involved in the intricacies of the national debt, and the private interests of his cotton, indigo, and muscovadoes, that he had scarcely noted their gradual attainment of that lovely maturity, which now seemed to burst upon his domestic circle. "My dear James," soon became a superfluous preface to an unreasonable request; opera-boxes—the ancient music,—a new carriage—and a

ball,—were granted in an instant to Lucy's variations on the harp, or to Charlotte's views in the Highlands. The two young ladies had transplanted themselves from Grosvenor Place, with the resolute intention of modernizing the Gothic habits of their sober parents; of removing the area of their accomplished displays to higher ground; of "getting into society," as it is called, at any cost. Among the numerous arts and sciences in which their talents had found practice among their noble associates, was that highly important one, called rising in the world. Their vanity was deeply pledged to maintain themselves in the elevated position to which they had been temporarily promoted; and not the most stiff-necked maid of honour who ever purred along the galleries of St. James's, or the stately corridors of Hampton Court, could more abhorrently regard the plebeian tribe of Smiths, and Browns, and Joneses, and Greens, whose acquaintance had disgraced their earlier childhood.

Having persuaded their mother to pass an

aristocratic winter at their father's country seat, and for the first time in her life to desert "dear James" to the loneliness of the Harley Street fogs,[1] they naturally found themselves acceptable guests in those higher *coteries* of the county, where their *petits talens* could be made available. Two very pretty, well mannered girls,—dressed by Maradan, *chausséd* by Melnotte, and *guirlandéd* by Nattier,—who were *d'une adresse incomparable* at an impromptu charade or *tableau*, untirable in a *cotillon*, and willing to dance with any younger brother of tolerably good connexions, were valuable acquisitions to Lady C.'s weekly parties. They would dance, or act, or ride, or shoot, or sing, on the shortest notice; and such was their complaisance, that the darkest night or deepest snow did not render it necessary to offer them beds. On the strength of these profitable endowments, the value of the Forsyth family immediately rose fifty per cent. in the county of Bucks: and Lord D. and the Duchess of F. and Sir William de Hauteville, who had hitherto over-

looked Mr. Forsyth's useful exertions, extensive charities, and unblemished character—and his lady's soup-and-flannel-petticoat institutions, and amiable disposition, began for the first time to discover that they were "very worthy people," and highly deserving of being brought forward.

The reputation of "fifty thousand down," which accompanied the *début* of the daughters, and which was in some degree attested by the lustre of their diamond girandoles, and the size of their pearl necklaces, was not without its due effect. Many a younger brother and needy dandy had already crowded round them; Charlotte had half refused Sir Ralph Harberton; and Lucy had already frowned away the pretensions of the presuming Mr. Brill.

But both Charlotte and Lucy were wise enough to know that this provincial popularity extended no further than the last London turnpike; and that excepting a few squeezes at Lady C.'s, a supercilious bow from the duchess, and perhaps a formal dowager dinner at

Sir William de Hauteville's, their Buckinghamshire acquaintance would profit them but little in the fastidious haunts of London. The younger branches of these noble families would probably have the decency to notice them by an affectionate nod, on the occasion of some accidental meeting; or to drawl out—"My dear love, I have scarcely seen you since we came to town;—where have you hid yourself?—Why wern't you at the last Almack's?—Positively one sees nobody in London one cares about! Thank God we go away pretty early in July;—and then at dear Iver Lodge we shall have time to practise our favourite duets again!"—And to descend from society so refined and so cordial as this, to the odious tribe of Tomkinsons and Jenkinsons!—poor girls!—no wonder that they resolved on using their utmost endeavours to escape such a contingency.

James Montagu, meanwhile, had not been idle in his vocation. He had contrived to attract to Harley-street a few of the honourable Toms and Bobs who had been content to

borrow his money at Eton, and to ride his hunters at Oxford; and as he was a tall, well-looking, well-dressed young man, Lady C——, who had as many daughters as Queen Hecuba, had interested herself to get his name on her sister's list for Almack's, by way of a *pis aller* partner for some of her infinite progeny. But certain it is that an additional generation is required to polish the *male* members of a family of *parvenus*. Mr. Montagu Forsyth, having emulated all the advantages of his sisters, was nevertheless wholly deficient in the tact and *tournure* by which they were so valuably qualified. He was of the species of young men who appear to have two left legs and two left arms, —and a very decidedly *left* understanding. He was shy without being diffident,—a martyr to *mauvaise honte*,—would stand motionless during a whole evening beside the door-way of a ball-room, to which his sisters had moved heaven and earth to procure his admittance, simply for want of courage to traverse it alone;—and at his first Almack's, he had swallowed consecu-

tively four scalding cups of tea, in honour of the pleasing facility he found in addressing the dispensers of that nectareous beverage. Nay! he had well nigh choaked himself in his grateful assiduities to an accompanying plate of bread and butter, as dry as saw-dust.

The efforts of the Forsyths, during their first London season — the *unsuccessful* efforts — might have dispirited less resolute aspirants. Mrs. F. had been teased and cajoled by her offspring into weeding her visiting-book of all such offensive names as those of Mrs. William Macaw, and of Thompsons, Johnsons and Stevensons *ad infinitum*. They had persuaded her to renounce her *entrée* into those respectable mansions of the streets of Harley, Wimpole, or Welbeck,—of Oriental Portland Place, and its immediate purlieus, which bear so singular a character of sameness and monotony. Acquaint yourself with the domestic arrangements of one among the number, and you might draw a plan of all the rest; from the pattern of the stair carpet and colour of the moreen, to the reat

vases of Spode's manufacture, which grace the *encoignures*.

But amid these universal exclusions, she had been compelled to act ungraciously by many of the valued friends of her earlier years, whom Lucy and Charlotte had reprobated as quizzes, and who had become disgusted in their turn by the jargon of the young ladies, touching the "*air distingué* of the Ladies P.—the B. galaxy of beauty, or Lady Emily's C.'s enchanting grace." As the quizzes observed, these "bright particular stars" were nothing to *them*; their orbits were different; they had neither interests nor pleasures in common. It might do very well for the Forsyths, who had just the air of the figures in the *Journal des Modes*, and who could stoop to be taken up and let down, as those high mightinesses their country neighbours pleased, to ape such fashionable airs. But after all, what advantage had they derived? Would any young man of *ton* choose to connect themselves with a merchant's family?—or had all their manœuvring got them to Almack's?"

Such was the reasoning of many a dowdy matron, whose society poor chicken-pecked Mrs. Forsyth was apt to miss with a sigh during a long rainy evening, or the martyrdom of a solitary bilious head-ache!—*She* had not served her apprenticeship to the craft of fine ladyism, and the rupture of her early associations caused her many an uneasy hour. Her daughters, indeed, had their uneasy hours too;—arising principally from the source detected by the divining rod of the dowdies; they had not yet managed their *entrée* to Almack's!

And thus when, at the close of their second London season,—having persuaded Forsyth, sen. to refresh their roses, and his own House of Commons-worn strength, by a six weeks *séjour* at Weymouth,—they received an introduction from Lady Lilfield to Lady Mordaunt,—(two ladyships very creditable to their visiting list,) —the connexion between "poor Jane" and the elegant Lady Willersdale, and between Lady Willersdale and the supreme Lady Danvers—*the patroness*—gave her instant importance in

their eyes. Poor Jane, who had been existent during the whole of her neglected days in a green veil and nankin pelisse, was enchanted with the *canezous* and *collerettes* so obligingly presented as their own work (bought of Madlle. Colliau) by the Miss Forsyths. She took many a grateful walk with them on the esplanade, and ride with them on the cliffs; learnt the *galopade* on James Montagu's arm, and even began to dream of him:—a fact mysteriously revealed to him, *et avec malice*, by his sisters.

Now the *amour propre* of the young citizen had recently suffered a grievous affliction in the refusal of Lady Celina R.—a former school-fellow of his sisters, whom he had rashly favoured with his addresses. He turned therefore for consolation to Burke's Baronetage; admired the date of the Mordaunt creation, its magnificent alliances, ancient and modern; till the spirit gradually moved him with an ambition to figure on such a page. For once he consulted that worthy progenitor, whom he vulgarly called

" the governor; " and my dear James, who had been disturbed in his mind by certain rumours of the attractions of a certain *dauseuse* whom one of the honourable Toms had contrived to pension off upon his son, was peculiarly acquiescent and liberal on the occasion. In a few days the proposal was made, and as promptly accepted. Montagu Forsyth betook his two left-legs every morning to General Forbes's to pursue his thriving courtship;—a chrysophrase neck-lace arrived per mail from Rundell's; and poor Jane—*poor dear Jane!* became as suddenly and miraculously promoted into importance as Perronelle in the fairy tale.

And thus the Miss Forsyths beeame advanced full ten degrees towards Almack's.

CHAPTER V.

'Tis slander! —
Whose breath outvenoms all the worms of Nile.
Shakspeare.

"FASHIONABLE INTELLIGENCE.

"On Saturday last, by special licence, at Mordaunt Park, in the county of ——, James Montagu, eldest son of James Forsyth, Esq. M. P. of Iver Lodge, in the county of Bucks, to Jane, fourth daughter of Sir Stephen Mordaunt, bart. Immediately after the ceremony, which was performed by the Right Rev. the Lord Bishop of Chichester, the happy pair left the paternal residence of the lovely bride, for their seat in Bucks."

"So," said the Marchioness of C., yawning, as she threw aside that last resource against provincial *ennui*, the Morning Post, to gaze from the windows of the breakfast-room upon the hopeless prospect of a determined October rain. "So!—our neighbour, young Forsyth, appears to have made a very creditable choice. I am glad of it; the Forsyths are highly respectable people; and this young bride may prove an acquisition to our winter *réunions*."

"She is sister to that pretty Lady Willersdale who *débutéd* with so much *éclat* last season," replied her daughter Lady Juliana, standing mournfully at the window to watch the gradual drowning of her geranium-beds.

"And who made herself so conspicuous with your old partner, Colonel Seymour! Brill used to call her, *la coquette par naïveté!*—A very fascinating creature; and if our Mrs. Forsyth chance to resemble her, she promises well for our Christmas *tableaux*. Remind me, my dear Juliana, to send over our cards to Iver Lodge. Those people are getting on; I should not be

surprised if the daughters were to form tolerably good connexions. We will do what we can for them next winter," said the Marchioness patronizingly, as she rolled herself up in the capacious folds of her cachemere.

"Certainly," replied Lady Juliana, taking up her glass, to ascertain whether it were a tom-tit or a chaffinch that had perched upon her white dahlias. "Those little Forsyth girls are very useful neighbours—*d'ailleurs d'un commerce sans gêne*;—never bore one by the Missish trick *de se faire prier*. They seem to understand what has brought them among us, and to feel it their best wisdom to be always good-humoured and lively.—*C'est assez bourgeois—mais ça ne manque pas de tact!*"

"I half promised to speak to my sister about getting them to Almack's last year; they have an air of fashion *qui fait glisser sur mille petits défauts.*"

"And I," said Lady Juliana, returning in despair to her *fauteuil*, and dragging her tiny poodle into her lap to be tormented, "I really

intended to do my best to bring them forward; but somehow or other I entirely forgot them during the whole season. Not being *des notres*, one never saw them except at the opera. However, dear mamma, we shall have plenty of time to be civil to them; and when this deluge is pleased to subside, I shall not forget to send out a raven to Iver with cards and an olive branch."

It is not from that high class in which they sacrifice so much and so basely to place themselves, that persons of the Forsyth caste are buffetted by the whips and scorns forming the balance of their success. A woman of Lady C.'s rank in life has nothing to fear from their advance, nothing to envy in their triumph; her own immeasurable elevation above their head withdraws her attention from their pigmy movements; and she considers them only in the point of view which renders them useful or agreeable to herself; or if conscious of their rise in society, she does not fail to applaud an event in which she has been partly instrumental. Thus

the nobler brutes of the field disdain to trample on a crawler of the dust: and reptiles only prey upon their fellow reptiles.

This fact became painfully evident to the Forsyth family in the course of the autumnal fortnight they were destined to pass in Harley Street, during the temporary cession of Iver Lodge to the bride and bridegroom. Gratulatory letters, setting forth the tenderest sympathy in the event, flowed in from all their Lady Sophias, and Honourable Georginas; — the Buckinghamshire grandees were unexceptionably cordial in their bridal civilities to Mr. and Mrs. Montagu; but from the united forces of Browns, Whites, Greens, Jenkinsons, and Tomkinsons, there arose an insulting murmur, rivalling the discontented clamours of Coriolanus's mob.

Of this the Forsyths, who had become wholly ignorant of their plebeian existence, excepting during those three weekly hours in which they permitted themselves to exhibit their *Journal des modes*-ish pelisses from the gallery of Mary-

la-bonne Church, might have remained in blissful unconsciousness. But like other martyrs —from Job the patient, to Sir Fretful Plagiary the impatient—they had the evil fortune to be blessed with a friend! Mrs. Forsyth had a brother and some nieces, whom not even her fastidious daughters could prevail upon her to *cut;* although she generally contrived to niche their visits and propitiatory dinners into some superfluous moment, otherwise unavailable; such as Easter week, or a family mourning, or an autumnal incognito *séjour* in town, like that of the present occasion.

The prettiest, and cleverest, and most spiteful of these nieces, was married to a very gentlemanlike young lawyer, of good connexions; and the Willis Clintons might have been very fairly produceable in the new Harley Street *coterie*, but that they were unfortunate in a small income, an increasing family, and a residence in an obscure and unmentionable street. Charlotte and Lucy dismissed them from their affections without a sigh; but little Mrs. Wil-

lis, who had all the flippant smartness of tongue of a *vaudeville soubrette*, did not let them off so easily. She was possessed of the talent, or rather of the insolence, which enabled her to say the most cutting things imaginable, wrapped up in the flimsy folds of a sarcastic compliment; smiling in your very face, she would present you with a catalogue of all your worst defects, magnified by the bitter irony of flattery;—a species of banter, which in her own circle had insured her the characteristic *sobriquet* of Lady Mungo Malagrowther!

It is not to be imagined that a little shrew of this calibre could patiently overlook the impertinent elevation of the Forsyths, or their irritating neglect of her claims upon their attention; and having been invited with her husband to a Sunday dinner in Harley Street, during the dull fortnight succeeding their Mordaunt splendours, she entered the drawing-room, charged with venom to the very tip of her tongue. Her husband's presence, who occasionally found himself constrained to check her flippancy by public

admonitions, and the grave brow of her uncle Forsyth, kept her in tolerable order during dinner; but when the ladies retired to their gossipping, and she saw that nobody but the curate's wife in a dyed silk gown was invited to meet her, she took her seat in the fireside circle, with a screen in her hand and a scourge between her lips.

"How very much improved dear Charlotte is in looks by her residence at Weymouth," said she, addressing her aunt. "We must take care she does not acquire too much *embonpoint* to do credit to the *ingénuités* at the C. House Theatricals." Poor Charlotte who was naturally thin, and who had been *galopaded* to a skeleton during the London season, bit her lips with indignation.

"And our little Lucy, my dear aunt! Any other complexion would have suffered from all those rides, and all that barouche-boxing which we saw duly announced among the fashionable movements in the Dorsetshire Telegraph; but really Lucy has been tanned into fairness."

Lucy Forsyth blushed deeper than her pink *gros de naples* dress, at an insinuation provoked by her somewhat pronounced *teint de brunette.*

Mrs. Forsyth, however, smiled goodnaturedly at something that *sounded* like a compliment to her daughters:—she was at all times very unsuspecting, and at present very dozy.

"It is a great comfort to see that the Forsyth family is not to forfeit at once its reputation for beauty. I understand Jem's wife is not likely to prove a dangerous rival;—ophthalmic I am told—with red hair; and the gait of an emu! Well! one must not expect to monopolize every thing;—Jem has bought his way collaterally into the Baronetage, which is highly gratifying to us all; we had no right to look for sense or beauty."

"Jane is a very pleasing young woman," said her aunt mildly.

"Mrs. Montagu Forsyth is very amiable and very well-bred," added Lucy with spirit, "qualifications I hope we know how to value."

"You really delight me,—I had heard so

different an account, and from so many different people. My friend, Mrs. Richard Green, of Gower Street—I fear I shock you, my dear cousins, by mentioning such a person and such a place,—but I fancy poor Mrs. Green formerly took the liberty of being Lucy's godmother,—has a governess who lived till last year with the Mordaunts; and she assures me that Jane Mordaunt always went by the name of "poor Jane," or "*la petite niaise*," among them;—a poor nervous silly creature, she said, who was so idiotic that she never could be made to understand that cucumbers did not grow in slices."

"I have formerly heard you affix that witticism, Nancy, upon other shoulders," said Charlotte Forsyth, coldly.

"The Mordaunts I find are very showy people;—belong to the "vast family of the Surfaces." A fine old service of plate, daily insulted by a *réchauffé* of a dinner—bad the first day, and horrible in repetition;—and a levy of flaunting liveries at the sideboard, hung upon

stable-boys and plough-boys,—who dip their *aiguillettes* into your soup, and hiss while they are rubbing down a plate."

"Our party at Mordaunt was so pleasant that we had little leisure to enter into the details of the servants' hall—besides we were satisfied, that if there were any ill-natured observations to be made, we should hear them from *you*, Nancy, on our return."

"Me! my dear Chatty!—pray do not imagine that I presume to know, or guess, or dream, what things are done or said among such grandiosities as *la famille Mordaunt*. Oh! no, my dear,—I belong to a vile, vulgar, obsolete school of people, who are content to eat their own unsophisticated roast mutton, and to associate with those of their own rank and condition. We are so unfortunate as to know nothing of your Lady C.'s, or Sir William de Hautevilles, and so tasteless as to care as little; a want of ambition which preserves us from all those rubs and mortifications that pride is heir to. *Your* Lady Julianas, would as soon think of putting

up their impertinent *lorgnettes* at *us*, as at the flies, and gnats, and worms, with whom they obligingly class such obscurities as you and I;—every calamity, you know, has its *beau coté*."

"By the way, mamma," said Charlotte, somewhat injudiciously, "my brother and sister dine to-morrow at C. Priory;—I hope Jane will not fatigue herself.—She is enchanted with Lady Juliana."

"Poor thing!" exclaimed Mrs. Willis Clinton, who had been taking a moment's breath; "it must be *so* flattering to her to find herself spoken to, and noticed like other people;—she used to run about at home like a hunted hare. At the time of her sister Lady Willersdale's marriage,—who ran away afterwards you know,—*six weeks afterwards*,—with Colonel Seymour of the Guards, they locked up "poor Jane" in the school-room that she might not commit suicide with the wedding-cake."

"Nay! now, my dear madam, I must really ask your pardon for interrupting you," said old

Mrs. Makepeace, the curate's wife, who had been gradually edging herself into the circle, with her pocket handkerchief spread over her gown, to preserve it from the trying heat of a register stove. "At the time of my Lord Willersdale's duel, which was full *five months* after his marriage, Mr. Makepeace was called upon by Lady Danvers for his professional services—(his lordship, Ma'am, was at the last extremity)—and Mr. M—— has frequently assured me, that he never beheld a more attentive, affectionate nurse than her ladyship;—poor young thing!"

"Mere jointure-love;—the Ephesian matron's tears!—And pray, my dear cousins, are you so fortunate as to have secured an introduction to that spotless Ethiop, Lady Danvers?—whose *amourettes* have run through every degree and leaf of the peerage,—down to—we will not say how low;—whose name has been coupled with those of all sorts and conditions of men—yet only to be bleached of its stains by the muriatic acid of supreme *ton?*

Happy girls!—after all your pains, you will reach Almack's at last!"

"Your Gower Street spies leave you sadly in the dark, Nancy, on some points;—or you would know that we were at Almack's last season.

"Ah! yes, at the Caledonian ball,—the Caledonian bore."

"No! my dear," said Mrs. Forsyth, with an air of remonstrance at being waked up by the elevated voices of her daughters. "We never attend the charity-balls;—Lady Juliana C. always observes that no persons can appear at such places, without compromising themselves, except those of *decided* rank. We generally send our tickets on such occasions to your sisters. *My* daughters alluded to the Wednesday balls."

"For *balls*, let us more correctly read *ball*: I remember it all now. Mr. Brill, brother to my friend Mrs. Skinner—do not faint! dearest Lucy—I blush to say that I really *have* a friend of the name of Skinner—Mr. Brill, who has a taste like yourselves for being a *souffre*

douleur to lords and ladies, told me he saw you there at the skeleton ball."

"*The skeleton ball!*" reiterated Mrs. Make-peace, with her mind professionally reverted towards the valley of dry bones.

"The ball which chances annually on the night before Epsom races. No one who is sure of a subscription through the season, would risk losing an early position for the Derby, by dancing all night; so for the love of Willis, the patronesses make out a skeleton ball from the excluded list. Collinet never attends on that occasion;—he declares that the counting-house keys of the young bankers and cits, rattle like all the castanets of all Castile, and overpower his flageolet."

"I trust you will judge for yourself next season," said Miss Forsyth, in a fever of secret vexation. "We will ask Lady Danvers to admit you, as being most undeniably on the *excluded list.*"

"First *catch* your patroness, my considerate cousin! Lady Danvers is rather too deep in

Storr's, and Howell's, and Dévys, and Carson's books, to make her appearance in town till her asthmatic old Lord is pleased to whitewash her with dowagership and a jointure. She is travelling in Italy, having taken her eldest son from Eton to complete his education, she says, among the Neapolitan *Marchese*. Your old friends, the Robinsons of Bloomsbury Square, left her at Rome flirting with Cardinal Cacciapiatti. The Pope very nearly dismissed her from his territories, for caricaturing the sacred college with sticks of red sealing-wax for legs;—but Lady Danvers threatened to bring the affair before Parliament, and what with Lord Willersdale's interest, and the recency of the Catholic bill, his Holiness began to remember that 'the better part of valour was discretion.'"

"*Quel conte!*" observed Lucy to Charlotte in an audible aside. "When the Danvers's have not yet proceeded farther than Florence."

"Pardon me! her Ladyship passed through Florence in the night. She found the ambassadress there had certain scruples about re-

ceiving her, on account of a Mr. Wilmington, who travels in her train; and "—

"My dear Anne," interrupted her uncle, who, with her husband and Mr. Makepeace, had entered unobserved during this femininely vehement discussion, "do not teach my little girls here to look too curiously upon the reverse of the tapestry of society. Half the scandals we gather are the inventions of mendacious and malicious tongues; the other half form a topic altogether unbecoming the lips of a virtuous female; and to dwell continually upon the chronicles of vice and licentiousness, betrays, to say the least of it, an indelicate mind."

"I thank you, Sir," said Mr. Willis Clinton, feelingly; "you have spared me a painful but necessary reprimand."

"Oh! my dear uncle," rejoined the little shrew, no whit abashed or subdued—"we all know that *you* political theorists are fond of an Utopia; and whether it suits you to fix your ideas of the perfectibility of human nature at New Harmony, or in the pauper colonies, or at

Almack's, *qu'importe?*—it is but an amiable weakness. I have no doubt that all the sons of the peerage are brave—all the daughters virtuous, since you and my good aunt decide them to be so. But I hear an ominous jingle at the door, which warns me that my hour is come, and the social pleasures of my evening ended. Clinton, give me my shawl; I will not distress my uncle's butler by obliging him to announce 'Mrs. Willis Clinton's *coach*.' Besides, if Lady C.'s horses were to scent its plebeian flavour next season, they might die of the staggers at his door."

CHAPTER VI.

She was a phantom of delight
When first she beamed upon my sight;
Her eyes, as stars of twilight fair,
Like twilight too, her dusky hair;—
But all things else about her drawn
From May time, and the cheerful dawn;
A dancing shape, an image gay,
To haunt, to startle, and waylay!
Her household motions, light and free,
And steps of virgin liberty;
A creature not too bright or good
For human nature's daily food,—
For transient sorrows—simple wiles,—
Praise, blame, love, kisses, tears, and smiles.

Wordsworth.

"WELL! my dearest Helen!" said Lord Willersdale, turning from a library-table, covered with ominous-looking papers, petitions, draughts of bills, copies of acts of parliament, and pri-

vate letters of impertinent condolence, or hypocritical congratulation, and kindly extending a hand of welcome to the beautiful being, bright with health and joy, who stole to his side in interruption of his weighty labours—" Well, what success in your hopes of a heroine?—Is the mysterious Florence 'black, brown, or fair?'—worthy of three volumes or of five?—*allegra*, or *penserosa*. Come, confess the truth!—did you not find her with 'her hair loosely flowing—robes as free,' negligently seated in some woodbine bower, with the 'Promessi Sposi,' or 'Wilhelm Meister' in her hand?"

"Wrong at every point;—I begin to acknowledge the truth of the adage, that no man is a prophet in his own country."

"Make haste then to set me right, for I have only five minutes to bestow, before post-time, on the catalogue of Miss Dudley's perfections."

"I have half a mind to punish your *insouciance*, by putting off my explanation till to-morrow, when you will have an opportunity of

judging for yourself; but for my own satisfaction, as a revenge upon my own enthusiasm, I will acknowledge that I am rather disappointed in my *heroine*, as you have presumed to call her."

"Ah! *tant mieux! me voilà rassuré!* If you did but know, dear Helen, how cordially I abhor your Tilburinas and Cherubinas, and all the heavenly host of young ladies, with 'fragile forms,' and an 'exquisite sensibility.' If you did but know how beautiful in my eyes is the calm simplicity of a truly feminine nature."

"Delightful!" exclaimed Lady Willersdale, clapping her hands—"You are drawing Florence Dudley's picture; and it is her very calmness and simplicity which have somewhat disenchanted my preconceptions. I found her knitting in a most common-place parlour, without a discernible trace of the wit, wisdom, and sentiment I had attributed to Lady Theodosia's wild Irish muse; she neither blushed nor smiled at the approach of a stranger, and I, who but a few months ago could scarcely stammer out a dozen coherent words to a new acquaintance,

felt myself quite amazed by the tranquil self-possession with which she made her inquiries, or answered mine. *Enfin c'est la raison même ;—*

A being breathing thoughtful breath ;

and I own I am disappointed in the hopes I had formed of a sort of meteoric beauty—a living rainbow—a "—

Lord Willersdale placed his hand upon her eager lips. " No rhapsodies *à la d'Alincourt !* but finish your recital where it ought to have begun. Is Edwards's fair charge really so lovely as to justify Mrs. Daly's complaints? "

" What complaints ? "

" That she has turned the heads of young Mitford, and of the hopeful heir of Daly House."

" A thousand thanks !—my hopes are beginning to return—I see she will be my heroine after all. But to answer your bold inquiries ! In the first place my eyes are at present so conventionalized—excuse the coinage—by a season in London, *que tout ce qui n'est point du bon ton, me paroît du mauvais genre.* I do not

know that I should admire the Florentine Venus, unless her hair could be *crêpé*, and her dress made by Maradan."

"Fie! fie!—do not plead guilty to such depravity of taste;—it is a feminine folly unworthy of you."

"It is a prejudice necessarily acquired in society; and as Miss Dudley——"

"Has she already 'tumbled down to prose,' and become a mere Miss Dudley with you?—she was 'Florence' yesterday! Oh! Helen! Helen! what a triumph for Mrs. Daly."

"Well then—*Florence*—who has never been infected with the false worship of fashion which you are pleased to reprobate—Florence has an air of the *beau milieu* between a quaker and an antique statue. She has the smallest head and most regular features you can imagine; but they are unrelieved by the vestige of a curl; and except when she is in movement, and you can admire the grace and symmetry of her beautiful figure, she has an appearance of formality. What struck me most in her air,

was a character of innate high-breeding, and a resemblance to some familiar countenance which I am at present unable to trace to its source. To-morrow you must assist in my discoveries—for I have prevailed upon Mr. Edwards and herself to meet the Mitfords here at dinner."

"Have you indeed!—I am very glad, and still more sorry to hear it—for I must positively make the Dalys our first guests at the castle;—and I suspect that my friend, Lady Theodosia,—excellent as she is—is not very forbearing towards Daly's foolish wife."

"Cannot you defer their visit till the following day?"

"On no account. Mitford is my old and valued friend,—but Daly is even more. I owe him a vast debt of gratitude. No *money* could repay the anxious cares he has so judiciously bestowed upon my interests; and the happy faces, and industrious homes I have visited this morning, claim all our attentions and all our regard towards the author of so much good."

"I will write them a note then, this very moment, praying that Providence may bestow its choicest head-ache, or cold, or fit of unsociability, upon this worthy creature's odious wife."

But Lady Willersdale's uncharitable wishes were wholly unavailing. Felicia was blessed at once with a robust constitution, and with an unappeasable curiosity for seeing how other people ate their dinners. The mere prospect of withdrawing from their respective band-boxes the turbans, *toques*, or *bérets*, which had been fading in obscurity since her last visit to the cherished upper rooms—the mere expectation of being enabled to address to Mrs. O'Shaughnessy an elaborate description of Monsieur Laurent's *entrées*, and *hors d'œuvres*, kept her pillow sleepless on the intervening night. And when the eventful moment really arrived, and she tripped along the saloon, *en grande tenue*, with simpering consciousness towards its lovely proprietress, Helen could scarcely sufficiently admire the look of grave indifference with which

Miss Dudley's large dark eyes passed unconsciously over the details of a figure that would have made the fortune of a modern farce. Her own good breeding, as well as her deference towards the excellent husband who remained fortunately blind, or hardened by habit to the spectacle of Mrs. Daly's vulgar absurdity, restrained her secret amazement within equally decent limits: but the arrival of the Mitfords, with their frank, cordial, generalizing manners, was a relief to the whole party. The motherly kiss, however, bestowed by Lady Theodosia upon Florence Dudley, and the intimate greeting between the General and the two pastors—Protestant and Catholic—provoked a malevolent sneer from the envious Mrs. Daly;—who sat swelling beneath the scanty folds of her bright lilac satin robe. Lord Willersdale now made his appearance in the little circle, and scarcely marked a distinction in his graceful courtesies towards his three female guests; but the surprise and admiration evident on his introduction to Miss Dudley, not

only renewed the disgusts of Felicia, but brought a flush of gratification to the pallid countenance of Mr. Edwards.

Mrs. O'Shaughnessy of the Youghal Militia, was destined to learn, on the following day, that the dinner, splendid and incomprehensible as it was, had proved silent, and dull, and unsociable. "Edwards and O'Daly, you know, my dear, are at all times the dullest creatures breathing; Lady W. is a mere doll—my lord very pompous—although I must needs say he asked me to take Champagne with him in a most winning manner—Lady Theodosia in her upper-hand, patronizing way, engrosses all D.'s attentions; and as to the General, with his broad bronzed face and campaigning voice—between his old stories talked over with Lord W. and his barefaced flirting with that demure, artful, mysterious nobody of ours, he was more unendurable than ever! Lord! my dear! a dinner at the castle is no more to be compared with the profusion and cheerfulness of one of my poor father's turtle feasts!—I

assure you I was mighty glad to find my feet on my own fender at Daly House again. Our only diversion in the course of the evening was one of Miss Florence's Irish howls;—which, as usual, set Father O'Daly and the Mitfords into an ecstacy of admiration."

Felicia was on this occasion less imaginative than in her ordinary style of epistolary correspondence; the entertainment had proved, in truth, languid and spiritless. Lady Theodosia, who, at so advanced a season of the year, had preferred accepting an offered bed at Willersdale Castle, to re-crossing the ferry on a moonless night, had postponed the indulgence of unrestrained conversation with Lady Willersdale, till the departure of the Dalys should have removed an officious and misinterpretative auditress; and it was her consciousness of the silence and restraint which overhung the little circle, that had induced her to request Miss Dudley would attempt to divert the *ennui* of her lovely hostess, by singing a national melody in the national language—a novelty, as she

rightly conjectured, to English ears. Mrs. Daly, meanwhile, having been accustomed to find her own accomplished daughter "yield her charms of song with sweet delay," could scarcely repress her indignation at the *sang froid* with which Florence, after having applied to Mr. Edwards for his sanction, drew her chair towards Lady Willersdale's sofa, and wholly without affectation or embarrassment, but with the deepest feeling, began to pour forth the touching strain of the "Fox's Sleep." Her voice was full and powerful, but exquisitely modulated; and when its stirring tones gradually subsided into a minor, and from that mournful transition, into a close of the tenderest beauty, not one of her audience but was silent from that sympathizing sense of melodious sound, which has been defined as "the only sensual pleasure without vice."

Lady Willersdale was delighted, both with the song and the songstress; but she found it difficult to inspire her neighbour, of the lilac satin robe, with any portion of her enthusiasm.

"I own myself difficult with regard to music," said Mrs. Daly, in her usual mincing nimini-pimini manner. "It was a resource in which I formerly took great delight during my solitary seclusion." And she had, in fact, been as brilliant a pianiste, as can be accomplished by unceasing practice, in defiance of an incorrect ear, and inelegant taste. "And really, Me'em, music is an art which modern times have wrought to such high perfection, that one has a right to be a little fastidious. Now, even *my* Felicia, who, I can assure your la'ship, dashes off *Rozini* and *Weeber* at sight, scarcely comes up to my notions of what a finished *cantatreecy* ought to be."

"Are you an enthusiastic Rossiniste?" inquired Florence Dudley, of Lady Willersdale, who was addressing to the gratified girl some eager commendation of her voice.

"In spite of the severity of the more classical German school, I fear I am; but not altogether on the grounds that have rendered him so popular a composer, and formed his peculiar

school. The airy graces of his *opera buffa*—out *Rossini-ed* as they are by the ultra skill of half the prima-donnas of the day, have already satiated me by their cloying sweetness. It is the pathetic vein of Rossini which reaches my heart; such as the second act of the *Gazza Ladra*, Semiramide, or Otello."

"If that be indeed the character of your musical taste," said Lady Theodosia, "I am inclined to regret that your instruments are not yet unpacked; and that yonder ghastly-looking harpsichord should have remained stringless and tuneless for the last twenty years. Even Florence's good nature will scarcely extend to the martyrdom of an Italian song without accompaniments; or I trust she would be able to afford you pleasure in your favourite style."

"I think, Helen, I saw your harp honourably stationed this morning in your dressing-room?" observed Lord Willersdale, who was infinitely pleased by the excellence of Miss Dudley's performance.

Lady Willersdale looked inquiringly towards

Lady Theodosia, under a persuasion of the improbability that Florence should have found opportunities to acquire a mastery of such an instrument.

"Florence is a proficient on the harp," she replied. "I gave her some lessons, many years ago, but she soon surpassed my experience."

"Will your ladyship intrust me with the commission of fetching the harp?" said the good-natured Daly. "I have seldom the happiness of hearing Miss Florence, and am therefore interested in the commission."

"Oh, my dear D.," exclaimed his fussy wife, elevating her hands with consternation; "remember your awkwardness—remember your responsibility; her la'ship's favourite instrument. Pray do not incur so dreadful a hazard."

But during this conjugal remonstrance, Vernon had been summoned by Lord Willersdale; and in a few minutes his adroit assiduity introduced into the saloon the memorable instrument of sandalwood and steel, which had been

a peace-offering from Lady Danvers, and a stumbling-block of offence to Lady Mordaunt.

"What an exquisite *beejoo*," exclaimed Felicia; "how tasty! even in Bath I can assure your la'ship, I never beheld a sweeter instrument."

"The tone is indeed lovely," said Miss Dudley, rising and striking a few chords. "And what is a still greater charm in my eyes, its mechanism appears almost as simple and manageable as that of my own old-fashioned favourite. I had heard such alarming accounts of modern improvements, that I almost dreaded the touch of an English harp. But surely your ladyship will permit me to learn the powers of this from yourself; or am I presuming too much?"

"I will play to you as much and as often as you wish," said Helen, good-humouredly, "when I have recovered the first shock of learning my own mortifying inferiority. Spare me to-night, my dear Miss Dudley; and give us *all* the pleasure of hearing you again."

Lady Theodosia, who had left her seat to admire the elegance of the Parisian toy, which, as a mere musical instrument, exhibited many obsolete deficiencies and errors of construction, joined in the request; and in a moment Florence, with unassured but skilful fingers, commenced the symphony of Desdemona's "*Salice*" romance. If her Irish melody had succeeded in winning the applause of her auditors, this beautiful aria far outpassed her former triumph. The simple pathos, clear enunciation, and graceful modulation with which her sweet voice overpowered its somewhat elaborate accompaniment, enchanted the pure taste of Lady Willersdale.

"A thousand thousand thanks," she exclaimed with ardent enthusiasm, as the last chord melted through the vast saloon. "I scarcely recognize in your touching melody, the air I have so often heard polluted by the tinsel graces of our fashionable performers. You have given me a new and true idea of Rossini's powers."

"My dear D., I sadly fear we must be moving," said the stony Mrs. Daly, while Lord

Willersdale united his cordial compliments to Mr. Edwards, and Lady Theodosia, and their *protégée*. "The carriage has been announced some time—only I did not wish to interrupt Miss Florence's pretty song. Perhaps we can set her home."

Lord Willersdale's chariot, which had been sent for the inmates of the rectory, was declared to be waiting their commands to convey them back. Mrs. Daly was indignant that her assistance had been mistrusted; and jerked on her shawl with only one ear accessible to General Mitford's jocose adieus. Her departure would have been felt as a general relief, had it not been immediately followed by that of the graceful and modest Florence.

"Thank you for listening to me so kindly," said she at parting to Lady Willersdale, "I am accustomed to a very partial audience, but I had not dared expect so much indulgence from your ladyship."

"You must put my indulgence to the proof at the expense of your own patience," replied

Helen, kindly taking her hand, and following her to the door. "I have a genuine love of music, and never feel it so deeply gratified, as by the skill of a private performer, in whom I am interested."

Lady Theodosia, immediately on the departure of the remaining guests, proposed retiring for the night; she was aware from old experience, that her husband and Lord Willersdale were anxious for the unrestrained intercourse of a social *tête-à-tête*. But she had not been many minutes established in her dressing-room, when a gentle tap at the door demanded admittance for her hostess.

"May I come in?" said Helen. "Will you let me profit by one of our old English country customs, and sanction my intrusion by inquiring whether you find every thing here you desire? I am afraid that even with poor Mrs. O'Mahoney's zealous good will towards 'my Lady Theodosy—the rale lady though English,' you will find a lamentable deficiency. There is not a room in the castle more than half furnished,"

she continued, looking compassionately round the dreary apartment.

"When you have visited Mitford Lodge, you will find that we savage boors of the county of Galway are too poor to be fastidious. And now do me the favour of putting aside the impatient light in your hand, and seating yourself in the great arm-chair by my blazing fire, and satisfying my womanly curiosity. In the first place, what do you really think of '*Mr. Edwards's young lady?*'"

"I was dying for an invitation to a half-hour's gossip, dear Lady Theodosia," replied Helen, eagerly complying with the request, "and am only fearful of being turned out as a trespasser. But where shall I begin? How shall I find words to tell you how much I am startled and delighted by your wild Irish muse? I could not have believed that so much simple dignity could mingle with such diffidence and such fascination. Her talents—her air—which is something beyond even the elegance of fashion!—and then her singing!—surely she must have

perfected herself under some distinguished master?"

"The master who accomplishes the linnets and thrushes—*instinct!*—natural sensibility."

"And so unaffectedly obliging in her compliance."

"Florence has a spirit above all girlish *minauderie*. She appears intent upon giving pleasure, rather than upon pleasing. Her own share in the act never seems to occupy her attention. She is a glorious creature; gifted with a thousand talents and a thousand virtues."

"How grievous that she should have been destined to the obscurity of Willesville," said Helen, thoughtfully; "to the society and envy of such a being as Mrs. Daly. No wonder that she turns towards you with such grateful affection!—no wonder that you should interest yourself so warmly in her welfare."

"I am so unfortunate as to be childless," replied Lady Theodosia with some degree of emotion. "And I am persuaded that every

woman retains within her heart a well-spring of maternal love. Mine I own to be most abundant; and long ago deprived of the precious object on which it was early lavished, it has found in Florence Dudley a consolatory resource. I *do* love her—like a mother;—she deserves it; and I only grieve that circumstances forbid me to place her as near my heart as possible, by a marriage with Mitford's nephew, who has been in love with her ever since she was ten years old."

"And does Miss Dudley remain insensible to so constant an attachment?"

"Even the discernment of my maternal tenderness fails to penetrate the mystery. I have never dared interrogate Florence on the subject, and she has been equally forbearing towards myself. But Harry Mitford's character assimilates so little with her own,—his untamed volatility, and warm, frank, but unintellectual tone of mind, forms so strange a contrast with her thoughtful, and studious, and diffident spirit, that I earnestly hope she may have escaped

a peril of the heart so full of danger to her future happiness."

"And the young heir of Daly House?"

"William Daly, with every qualification to win her affection, and with a most earnest desire to render them available, has been still less successful. I scarcely know whether his silly mother's indignation has been more moved by his infatuation, or by his defeat. To own the truth, I have sometimes cherished a hope that my brother—*your friend*, dear Lady Willersdale—might become infected by my partiality, and prove a more favoured lover than either of our Connaught heroes. I was even rash enough to allude, in a letter to Barton, to the attractions of my *protégée*, and to my own fervent wishes. Pray guess his reply?"

"My imagination does not assist me."

"That having seen Lady Willersdale glancing amid the rail-road routine of fashionable life,

> Like some gay creature of the elements,
> That in the colours of the rainbow lives,

he had no further desire to bring himself to

the common level of humanity by falling in love with some cherry-cheeked brogue-disfigured village belle of the county of Galway!"

"What treason against the mild soft beauty of Florence Dudley! But surely the objections that might operate against her union with your nephew, might still further weigh in the scale against her chance of captivating Lord Barton?"

"Pardon me. Barton is rich; and—*soit dit en passant*—of a rank in society which requires no support from that of his wife. He has no parents to blame his choice — no guardian to consult but his own excellent understanding, and feeling heart. It is not so with Harry Mitford. His sole expectations are derived from the General, whose estates will prove, eventually, a scanty inheritance, and who is still in the prime of life. For my own part, I should not desire a happier prospect than that of establishing the young couple in our house, to share our moderate fortunes; for Florence Dudley's good gifts form, in my estimation, a natural

patent of nobility. But then *my* views on the subject are both English and feminine; while Mitford's blood is heated by a tincture of Milesian pride, and of masculine haughtiness. Men have a very different idea from ourselves of the value of the empty distinctions of society; and fortunately, and necessarily: for unless such honours assumed an undue importance to their minds, what incitements could be offered to their ambition in the field or the forum?—Besides, poor Florence's equivocal position in the world is known to every breathing creature of this neighbourhood; while in London, *chacun s'occupe trop de soi* to be dissatisfied with the simple announcement, that Lord Barton had married the beautiful daughter of an Irish clergyman."

"Then you really believe her to be Mr. Edwards's natural daughter."

"He calls her his ward, and assures her she is an orphan. Mr. Edwards is a man of honour and principle, and we have no right to discredit his assertions. Still, as I am per-

suaded he is sufficiently acute to have observed the scruples which have urged me to remove poor Harry as much as possible from her society, I conclude that, had the secret of Miss Dudley's birth been calculated to overcome the General's objections, he would have granted me his confidence."

"And Florence herself;—is she better informed on the subject?"

"Certainly not; and, unfortunately, she has now attained an age to become sensitive to the mystery of her condition, or perhaps I might say, to its disgrace. It has often given me pain to note her increasing reserve on all topics connected with birth and ancestry; for I cannot but believe that her premature gravity of demeanour arises from the workings of an unquiet mind. Once, indeed, I had an accidental opportunity of reading some lines of hers connected with a subject of this character, and it grieved me to——"

"Some lines! does she then unite the gift of poetry to her other inspirations?"

"To an exquisite deeree!—and it is the sole exercise of her talents which I have permitted myself to discourage."

"And why?—since it can only have displayed itself in a graceful and becoming form."

"Authorship is a dangerous temptation to a woman;—I would have none in whom I am interested incur such a dangerous publicity, till she has attained her fullest years of discretion. So many minerals glitter on their surface which are not sterling ore;—so many youthful minds under the excitement of early scholarship, give promise of powers that their maturity will not realize!—And even when 'the light that leads astray is *really* light from Heaven,' what attractions and what irreplaceable pleasures does a woman renounce, who places the reprobation of the laurel upon her brow!—Depend upon it, that next to the solitude of a throne, there is nothing like the loneliness of authorship.—No one addresses a distinguished writer in a natural or confidential tone; he is believed to be dis-

dainful of the humble charities of life, and indifferent to its ordinary interests. If a novelist, —we fancy that he is 'taking notes' of our weaknesses, and examining our moral qualities, as a naturalist fixes his microscrope on a beetle or a snail;—if a philosopher, we feel in his presence like Gulliver, hid in the thimble of Glumdalclitch. Now for a man—a mere, dry, broad-clothed, ratiocinatious man, to gird on a gorgon's head and petrify society, is no sacrifice; for it is the vocation of his sex to act the colossus. But a woman has deeper and purer happiness in store."

"But to be a writer, dear Lady Theodosia, is not to be an *author!*"

"A step only divides the two;—*et d'ailleurs un pas fleuri et flatteur* which few resist. Few things more provokingly offend my ideas of feminine delicacy, than a young lady who goes about watering the dust of the earth with her elegiac tears. *Love* we know to be the natural theme of poetry; and love is a word that becomes fulsome, we are told, in *two* instances,

—on the lips of an old man, or on those of a young woman."

"But Mrs. Hemans!—Joanna Baillie!—surely even your fastidious taste will accord to their pages the most feminine purity of expression? And Miss Edgeworth!—one of the master spirits of the age!"

"Illustrious exceptions! which form no rule for a parcel of silly girls rhapsodizing about love and despair in the strain of Ophelia. But I am digressing from Willersville rectory to Paternoster Row; and that too in the betrayal of one of my sweet Florence's bosom secrets; but yet——"

"I hear General Mitford in his dressing-room," exclaimed Helen, starting to her feet. "How provoking! when I have still a whole labyrinth of mysteries to unravel."

"*A demain!*"—said Lady Theodosia, affectionately taking her hand. "Thank God! I find you already interested in my poor girl's prospects."

"*A demain!*" replied Lady Willersdale.

"And in your counsels, — your kind and motherly counsels to Miss Dudley,—do not forget that *I* am myself only two years her senior, and allow me sometimes to benefit by your experience."

"I cry your mercy, fair lady of Almack's!— my experience is calculated only for the atmosphere of the bogs;—

C'eut été bien peu à Paris,
Mais c'étoit beaucoup au village :

CHAPTER VII.

N'affectez point les éclats
D'une vertu trop austère;
La sagesse atrabilaire
Nous irrite et n'instruit pas.
C'est à la vertu de plaire,
Le vice a bien moins d'appas!
Précis de l'Ecclésiaste.

Autumn, which had long begun to "wear its berries red," now assumed its far less welcome crown of leafless branches. The woods spreading their majestic garniture upon the opposite banks of the Shannon, had lost their last blush of yellow brightness, and put on a winter suit of sober brown; excepting where crimson patches of dogwood, or the sombre green of an occasional yew, diversified their extent. Mitford Lodge could be plainly dis-

cerned through the severed trunks of its naked avenue; and the stately pine-tree grove adjoining the castle, and the ruffled waters of the river itself, had acquired a wintry voice of murmuring and lamentation.

Yet Lady Willersdale, amid all this gradual desolation, had never experienced a gloomy or unoccupied hour. Disappointed, in some measure, of her hopes that Lord Willersdale's time would become exclusively devoted to her claims, she was yet forced to avow that the country, and the county, and the neighbourhood,—his tenants, his agents, and his friend the General—had also an important demand upon his attention; and satisfied

That *she* was dearest still, come when she might,

she renounced her peremptory expectations with a tolerable grace. Her considerate husband had taken care that she should be amply supplied with all the new books, and new music, which the capricious avidity of modern wealth calls into ephemeral existence; and Lady Theodosia, who was fully capable of appre-

ciating the unpretending sweetness of Helen's character, had been kindly assiduous in her companionship of the rides, and walks, and excursions on the river, with which Miss Dudley had attempted to display to her new friend and protectress the beauties of the neighbouring scenery.

Mrs. Daly indeed scoffed at the idea of the Galway picturesque. Content to display her pink feathers and velvet pelisse in every muddy lane leading to those mansions of second-rate gentility which formed the theatre of her affected exhibitions, she could scarcely disguise her contempt of Florence Dudley's woodland wanderings; or her surprise at the enthusiasm with which Lady Willersdale followed her guidance to admire some extensive prospect, or striking reach of the river.

"If your la'ship had ever visited the neighbourhood of my father's seat in Wales, I rather fancy that the grandeur of a *mountinious* country, with its rocks and waterfalls, would have disgusted you with the insipidity of this."

"As a *visitor* I should probably have shared in your admiration. But a picturesque country, unless in a mining district, is rarely prosperous; and as a dweller in the land, I own that its promise of milk and honey, its rich pastures, and corn-fields, and abundant waters, have their due attraction. A busy mill, or a cheerful and well-distributed village,—such as those for which the estate is indebted to Mr. Daly's exertions,—form, in my estimation, objects far more beautiful than all the crags, or all the Arcadian vallies that ever

Savage Rosa dashed—or learned Poussin drew."

Mrs. Daly was puzzled to decide whether the "dashing Rosa" alluded to by her ladyship, could possibly be the Rosa Matilda whose pages had so often been treasured beneath her pillow in earlier days; but she wisely kept her dilemma to herself.

Meanwhile Lord Willersdale, although delighted to observe the increasing glow of health and happiness which had begun to brighten the countenance of his beautiful wife, and more than

content that she should find in the society of the excellent wife of his friend, and in the excitement of her daily intercourse with the studious and elegant Florence a resource against the weariness of her solitary home, was still at times prompted to regret that she had not been left for a time to the unassisted exercise of her own powers of self-entertainment. His estates, so admirable and so liberal in their mode of administration, afforded her few objects for the immediate exercise of her benevolence; but upon the less fertile lands of General Mitford, whose limited income restricted his powers of patronage within a narrow compass, there was penury, and wretchedness, and fever, at all times abounding, to tax her generous sympathy. Helen was never happier than while attending Lady Theodosia on her daily rounds through what she called her Siberia, and winning with gentle speech and open hand the cordial gratitude of its miserable denizens. She would return from these expeditions to share with Miss Dudley a lesson in oil-painting from Mr. O'Daly; who,

during a youthful sojourn in Rome had acquired considerable skill in the art; and who was gratified in the opportunity of imparting his instructions to two scholars at once so lovely, and so gifted to do them honour. Or establishing herself, under Florence's instructions, in the vast library of the castle, she would

Turn the tale by Ariosto told,

or seek to emulate her youthful instructress, in the pure Saxon accent with which she was enabled to recite the verses of Voss or Schiller.

To such avocations indeed, as exercises of the heart and head, Lord Willersdale could form no reasonable objection. But it grieved him to observe the facility with which Helen permitted herself to adopt the habits, and tastes, and occupations of others. He was anxious that her character should assume a tone and bent of its own; that she should become sensible to the importance of fixed principles of action; that a prompt and steady mode of reasoning should supersede those impulses of sensibility or caprice, which now regulated the march of her existence;

and believing that had she been condemned for a time to the necessity of solitary reflection and self-reliance, the re-action of her own mind would have tended to refine, and strengthen, and elevate its powers—he never heard without a sigh the approaching jingle of Mrs. Daly's jaunting-car, or noted without regret the livery of the Mitford boatmen.

But Lord Willersdale reasoned upon false premises. Nothing can be more essentially different than the organization of the male and female intellect. The mental energies of man have a tendency to expand in solitude:—like a detached tree, whose roots are daily enabled to extend their fibres towards the nutriment of fresh earth, and whose branches spread themselves unrestrained towards the sunshine and the breeze, his self-concentrated soul attains new powers with new acquirements, fresh vigour from unassisted contemplation; and like the limbs of Antæus, becomes re-invigorated by every renewed contact with the external frame of nature.

But it is not thus with womankind. Distinctly framed to seek its impulses of action from a more commanding sex, the female mind abandoned to a solitary exercise of its powers, languishes for support; becomes dispirited, sickly, and enervate; and acquires in the end either a tone of hardihood to disguise the consciousness of its hollow emptiness—or a mean and frivolous puerility, less offensive to others, but equally destructive to its own capability of self-sustainment.

Lady Willersdale, both in her intercourse with the intellectual Florence, and in her intimacy with the pious and contemplative friend who regarded them both with a motherly degree of interest, became actuated by unconscious feelings of emulation, which tended more to the development of her highest faculties, and most estimable qualities, than all the hours he would have gladly seen her devote to a solitary embroidery frame; or to a far more perilous random examination into the contents of the groaning shelves of a library—as promiscuous as those of the last century are apt to be.

There is an astonishing prejudice entertained by the male moiety of our kind in favour of the needle. Whether derived from a youthful association with the names of Penelope, or the matrons of Rome, or with the plaintive domesticities of Cowper's poetic pictures, men are apt to connect the work-box with the exercise of all housewifely virtues; as though any occupation could be peremptory on any sex, independently of the march of centuries, and the distinctions of rank!

Possibly, however, Lord Willersdale's regrets might in some measure proceed from the threatenings with which he was daily perplexed per post, and per newspaper, that his retreat from public life would not be allowed to become permanent. He was constantly assured, both by the assiduous correspondence of his former colleagues, and by the flourishing trumpets of the hirelings of the press, that the country not only needed the renewal of his official services, but that the vessel of the state was in hourly danger of a wreck during the absence of its best pilot.

Even Mr. Vernon—who was not only a quidnunc of the most decided tone, but who duly epistolarized with the ministerial yaletocracy from whose clubs he had been reluctantly forced to retire—was untiring in his assurances to the despairing Mademoiselle Florentine of their speedy return to Hamilton Place.

"*Ah! Vernon, cher ami!*" said she, weeping over her coffee, "*que m'as tu incité à suivre Miladi dans un pays baroque comme celui-ci! Sois sur qu'il n'y a que mon dévouement pour toi—et encore un petit peu le souvenir de cet élément affreux dont le trajet me martyrise, même en souvenir—qui pourroit m'y rétenir.*"

Vernon, with tender sympathy, replied by a strong allusion to a certain thousand pounds, still to be accumulated by their common labour, in order to instal them in that much coveted "Hotel for families and single gentlemen" which was to prove the future scene of their conjugal Eden; and by reading aloud a single sentence occupying a column and a half of a morning

paper, and solely setting forth the immediate necessity of Lord Willersdale's recall.

But if the perplexed statesman were dissatisfied with the tranquil and domestic manner in which the months of October and November extended their enjoyment to Lady Willersdale and her little knot of intimates, the approach of Christmas was destined to dissipate his last lingering expectations of a more solitary home. Lady Theodosia had already announced the early arrival of her sister Lady Isabella Vyvyan; who with her husband had been recently resident at Paris, and who had invited herself to pass some weeks at Mitford Lodge. Mrs. Daly was equally happy in the prospect of a visit from Mrs. O'Shaughnessy, and the return of her "sweet girl" from Bath; and William Daly and Harry Mitford were, as usual, expected in Galway for the winter vacation. Both were about to take their final leave of the University.

But another, and still more unexpected visitor was announced to Lady Willersdale, in the following letter from Lady Mordaunt.

" Wilton Crescent,
December 16, 182—.

" The profound regret, my dearest Helen, with which your father and myself have never ceased to contemplate your precipitate departure for Ireland, becomes daily less poignant, under the hopes which public report enables us to entertain of your return previous to the meeting of parliament. Persuaded, as we are, of the judicious discrimination actuating all your Lord's domestic measures, we cannot but feel that he was right to devote his brief respite from public duty, to a personal inspection of his private estate. The loss was ours alone! We felt it deeply, but forbore to repine! None but a parent can know the resignation necessary to a parent's heart!—

" Now there is dear Jane! what a deprivation has awaited me in her society!—for you well know, my sweet child, that little Emma and her governess form no substitute for the four charming young women who have been successively my companions at Mordaunt Park; and who

have been successively torn from our domestic circle, to adorn some other home! If it were not that my Jane is permanently established in London, and that I can constantly run up to her here whenever I have any little commissions to execute at Compton House, or feel myself lonely at Mordaunt, I know not how I should reconcile myself to the change! Mr. Forsyth has settled the young people in a charming house; small, but with an excellent spare bedroom; in one of those second-rate situations—one of those genteel retreats for the families of younger brothers of nobility, and elder sons with hale robust fathers, which require no *faste* or needless expenditure, yet maintain an appropriate respectability. A situation, in short, which says, '*Je suis en attendant mieux.*'

"I have dear Jane's carriage and horses entirely at my disposal; for you know she has scarcely an acquaintance in town. Excepting her dinners in Harley Street, she finds little temptation to go out. When I see my Helen once more settled in Hamilton Place—a circum-

stance which every one assures me must very very shortly take place—all my maternal wishes will be gratified. In the mean time, your brother John informs me that he has accepted Lord Willersdale's amiable invitation to visit you in Ireland during the woodcock season; and that he shall reach Willersdale Castle about Christmas. Now, as I conclude you must have correspondents in Dublin, you will very much oblige me, my dear Helen, by sending me over, on his return, a few pieces of Irish tabineto;—of the *narrow width*, for I intend them as a gift to my poor grandchildren, the little Lilfields. Pray remember, that the girls are unfortunate in their complexion: *three* take after Sir Robert, and are very tawny; the other *three*, who are thought to resemble my daughter Lilfield, are inclining to sallow; but as Anna Maria judiciously observes, the mind—the mind is every thing! Besides, the girls may improve as they grow up. By the way, do not name to Jack the contents of the parcel; for he regards

Beech Park with a very unbrotherly eye; and might neglect the commission.

"My daughter Gray thinks of coming to town in April for her confinement. If our excellent Lord Willersdale should really *come in*, I earnestly hope he may no longer overlook the claims of his old friend Sir Herbert Gray; for they have a very large family. Some people, however, talk of a dissolution of parliament, which I regret on Peter's account: his last election was a great pull upon your father! However, he is now secure of the Willersdale interest; and you would do well, my dear, occasionally to refresh his lordship's memory on the subject. A few hints in a certain quarter can do no harm.

"And now, farewell, my sweet exiled child!—Jane is waiting for me to drive to a sale at Phillips's; where we are tempted because it is a very snowy day, and I think we may pick up something cheap.

"Your ever affectionate

"A. M. Mordaunt."

"P. S. Your dear good father has been laid up with the gout at Mordaunt, these three weeks past."

Captain Mordaunt's arrival at the Castle followed so closely upon that of the maternal epistle, that Lady Willersdale had no time to forfeit the pleasure of the surprise thus kindly projected for her by her lord, in a visit from her favourite brother. She had the satisfaction too of perceiving that he produced upon her husband exactly the impression she could desire; that Lord Willersdale appeared to recognize in his new brother-in-law, that fine, frank, manly spirit, which formed the true distinction of his character. Not the *manliness*—so called—which expends itself in steeple-chases, rat-hunts, and the Fives' Court; but a simplicity of address, a rectitude of mind, an innate abhorrence of all things mean and unworthy, and a genuine ardour of patriotism;—united with the energies of a muscular frame, and that best letter of credit, an open handsome countenance. Jack Mordaunt was the worst dressed man in

His Majesty's foot-guards; and was never known to appear at Almack's—yet he was a general favourite with women, as well as with his own sex.

His delight on seeing his sister, from whom he had been separated for the last two years, was as genuine as it was *brusque*. He recorded how much she was grown, and admired the improvement and elegance of her appearance, as frankly as if she had been still a little girl, practising in a pinafore in the Mordaunt Park school-room; in one short hour, they became again the cordial brother and sister they had ever been. Captain Mordaunt had a thousand diverting details to relate of Jane's marriage, and of an archery-meeting into which he had been betrayed at Iver Lodge; where he assured her, the harp strings were anointed with atar of roses, and the rabbits fed upon pine-apple; while Helen amused him, in her turn, by her inimitable mimicries of Mrs. Daly's toad-eating civilities; and by her assurances that he would inevitably fall in love with their lovely neighbour at the rectory.

En attendant a flight of woodcocks, she even persuaded him, on the following morning, to hazard the danger by accompanying her on a visit to Miss Dudley. But they were informed by Mr. Edwards, that Florence was staying at Mitford Lodge; and the beauty of a bright winter day determined them to cross the river in perseverance of their pursuit. An agreeable surprise awaited them on their arrival. As they reached the entrance hall, peals of feminine laughter resounded from the drawing-room; and Captain Mordaunt, to whom Helen had represented her friend Lady Theodosia, as a woman of a certain age, of rather a serious turn of mind, and Florence as a recluse of the most sentimental character, began to fancy himself the subject of a mystification. Another minute convinced him that all this portentous mirth proceeded from a very different source.

Close by the fireside, in a *négligé* of the most delicate cachemere, with her hair entirely concealed by a simple morning cap, sat a very lovely woman of about five-and-twenty, who

scarcely rose or interrupted her smiles upon their entrance.

"I need not tell you that you see my madcap sister," said Lady Theodosia, presenting Lady Isabella Vyvyan to Lady Willersdale.

"Nor need you add how very glad she is to be seen. I can scarcely sufficiently thank you for your à propos arrival," she continued, turning towards Helen, who was seated near her. "Dosy and I have had a three days tête-à-tête; *et moi qui ne peux me passer de causerie*—I have suffered myself to be entrapped into giving her a thousand details of my existence in Paris. And now—would you believe it, Lady Willersdale?—she is treacherous enough to reward my frankness by a whole series of lectures—*mais des sermons qui ne finissent pas!*—and that too in a dreary winter day, and over a turf fire."

Lady Willersdale, with all her natural candour of mind, was unprepared for so immediate a confidence on the part of her new acquaintance; and attempted to divert her attention by some trifling inquiries relative to her journey.

" Oh, pray do not ask me! Next to the horror of being compelled to perform a winter pilgrimage over bad roads, with the occasional refreshment of still filthier inns, I estimate the bore of recounting its hair-breadth 'scapes. Besides, I look upon a steam packet, with all its terrible associations, to be unmentionable to ears polite. Pray believe, therefore, on my simple assurance—*foi d'Isabelle!*—that during our journey, we were hourly in peril of our valuable lives;—afflicted with divers of the Egyptian plagues—darkness and insects in particular;—and that when we finally arrived at the Lodge, the carriage had two broken springs; Vyvyan a fit of the jaundice from ill-humour; my boy a bilious fever; and myself *un accés de migraine;*— the peevishness of which I have liberally presented to poor Dosy, in return for all the tediousness she has been bestowing upon me;—*et nous voilà quittes.*"

" Not quite I imagine," said Lady W. " Since, if I am to judge by Lady Theodosia's looks this morning, the pleasure of your safe

arrival has rendered her cruelly insensible to your *maux de nerfs*."

"I never receive it as a compliment that people are glad to see me in the bogs. *D'abord, chez eux l'hospitalité est un vice épidémique; ça tient aux Marais!—et puis*—it must really be a signal relief to their eyes and ears, to look upon, and listen to an inhabitant of the Christian community."

"I perceive you have already received a visit from Mrs. Daly, and have formed your conclusions accordingly."

"My dear Daly!—is she really alive still? Dosy! I quite forgot to ask you after Felicia. No, Lady Willersdale, I have not yet been so fortunate; but she is an old and valued acquaintance—one of the few things not too solemn to be laughed at, in this said desolate county of Galway. Every three or four years, I fly over for a week or two, just to see that dear Dosy has not perished of the moral famine called *ennui*—a species of decease to which no Irish jury would be able to affix a verdict;

or perhaps, been piked or carded;—an event so common among them, that it would scarcely insure her a note of admiration in the corner of the Connaught Luminary."

"Captain Mordaunt!" said Lady Theodosia, somewhat ashamed of her sister's inconsiderate rattle, "I trust you will not form a rash opinion of our neighbourhood from Lady Isabella's caricatures; hers is the genuine Gallic creed—'*Hors Paris—le dêsert!*'—I believe our county to be one of the most peaceful in Ireland."

"So they will tell you in every other; even while martial law is declared at your gate. Just as in Lincolnshire, some unhappy wretch, decidedly web-footed, and chattering with an ague, will assure you no fens are to be found in that neighbourhood. 'Oh! no—twenty or thirty miles further on, the country *begins* to grow fenny.' But pray will your ladyship walk this morning, or shall we take a sail up *the ditch?*"

"It is fortunate, my dear Belle, that Mitford is not an auditor of your treasons."

"It would only add a *nuance* to the sovereign contempt in which he holds me. And let him be content with annihilating one of the family at a time. The General is dragging my poor wretched Vyvyan over his turnip-fields this miserable morning," she continued, turning to Helen, "being wholly incredulous that any one can be really indifferent to the *menu* of the sheep and cows. Pray, Captain Mordaunt, how do you mean to amuse yourself at Willersdale; I wish to borrow a hint for my conjugal advantage; and I understand you are a *nouveau débarqué* like ourselves."

"I fear I have less right to be difficult than your ladyship," he replied. I am perforce a most determined resident in London; and you will allow that the transition from the *pavé* of St. James's Street—every stone of which is an old familiar friend, and consequently a bore—to this fine scenery and new aspect of things, is not a change to be grumbled at. To say nothing of the comparison between meeting my sister at her breakfast table, and losing my-

self in a London fog on the road to early parade."

"Then I cannot hope for your sympathy in my regrets for the dear Tuilleries and their orange blossoms."

"Stay with us till the spring, Isabella, and we will rival them in the bloom of our lime-avenue."

"And so lose the last balls of the Carnival, and Pasta,—and every dear delight of dearest Paris?—No—no! not even for the society of my good, kind, excellent sister!—Do you know," she continued, addressing herself to Helen, "I look upon Dosy as a martyr *par excellence*;—as a pre-calendared saint, beatified by an earthly resignation of every mundane pleasure. You and I, Lady Willersdale—providence be thanked—are but birds of passage in this land of abomination; but I am persuaded that neither of us—nor any other existing woman—would support the monotony of Theodosia's destiny with Theodosia's patience. Barton and myself entertain a pious hope that

her virtues will atone for the deficiencies of the rest of her family."

"Your flatteries are quite affronting," said Lady Theodosia indulgently, as she attempted to arrange her work-box in concealment of her secret annoyance.

Captain Mordaunt, astonished and disgusted by Lady Isabella's flippancy, repeated the well-worn truism, that "contentment is the true fairy-gift to be prayed for over our cradles."

"The fact is," replied Lady Theodosia, "that all human discontent proceeds from our habit of over-rating our own claims. Few among us, were our case to be examined, would be found worthy a different destiny than that assigned us. But in our selfish apportionment of the parts of the drama,

All are Hamlets, and none are Laerteses!

If, 'aspiring to be angels, men rebel,' aspiring to the distinctions and glories of a metropolis—whether Paris or London—many a housewifely matron like myself, good only to see the linen

bleached and to watch the dairy-maid, is betrayed into fractious fine ladyism, and made a torment to herself and all around her."

"My proud modest sister, be merciful to yourself and me!" cried Lady Isabella.

"I *am* merciful to myself in the highest degree. For whenever I feel degenerating into a fit of the spleen, instead of ordering the boat and going over to scold Florence Dudley, or quarrel with Mrs. Daly, I sit down and remind myself that there has been no former period or position of my life, however irksome at the time, which at some subsequent moment or other, I have not looked back to with regret."

"But you occasionally visit England?" inquired Captain Mordaunt, who was the intimate friend of Lord Barton.

"Thank you! thank you! for bringing forward the claims of her native country to my assistance," exclaimed Lady Isabella. "If you can vindicate your indifference to Paris, dearest Dosy, how can you pretend to renounce your

home—your *father-land*, as the sentimental Germanize it?"

"The sentimental might Germanize it still more to my taste by calling it '*mein Jugend-land*'—an expression equally beautiful."

"We were assured," said Lady Willersdale, desirous to change a subject which she perceived was growing painful to her friend, "that Florence Dudley was on a visit at the Lodge."

"She has been here these two days. Isabella is very much struck with her improvement during the last three years; she is enchanted with her."

"You have done your best, however, to spoil her exquisite beauty, by making her solemn and pedantic. At this very moment, Lady Willersdale, she has despatched her into the dining-room, on pretence of amusing my boy—my *spoiled* boy—Algernon; but in truth, to escape my Paris reminiscences. They would have done her all the good in the world; young ladies should not be brought up with a false idea of the purity of society."

" Florence Dudley, who has little chance of becoming better acquainted with it, may at least be spared all premature corruption. But come! let us visit her; it must be nearly luncheon time."

The little party accordingly proceeded under Lady Theodosia's guidance to the dining-room; where the spectacle that presented itself, was characteristic of any thing rather than solemnity or pedantry. With her hair dishevelled into utter disorder by the violence of Lady Isabella's lovely boy, who had clambered upon her back, and with her beautiful face flushed by her exertions to restrain him from further violence, Miss Dudley vainly attempted to shrink away from their observation; but she was compelled to receive Lady Willersdale's hasty introduction of her brother, and Lady Theodosia's apologies for her little nephew's intractability, with the same embarrassed position and crimsoned brow.

" *Ecoute m'amour!* " said Lady Isabella, disengaging little Algernon, and peremptorily

placing him on her own knees. "*Voilà ta tante qui te traite de polisson—d'ours,—de mauvais sujet!—Sois sage, mon ami! sois sage; ou ton papa se mêlera toute à l'heure de l'affaire.*"

"*Florence!—ma bellotte!—mon petit cœur!*" said the child, again taking refuge by Miss Dudley's side, "*tu ne veux pas qu'on me gronde, n'est-ce-pas? Tu vas dire pour moi un petit mot à ma tante, qui exige que je sois raisonable depuis le matin jusqu'au soir!—Ah! mon dieu! mon dieu! que ça m'ennuie d'être sage! —et à Paris il n'en est jamais question.*"

Lady Isabella, enchanted with a reply so entirely consonant with her own modes of speech, seized the little chatterer in her arms, and began to reward with fruit and cake as liberally as her sister was in the act of refreshing Captain Mordaunt with grouse-pie; which formed an opportune and inexhaustible theme of inquiry to so ardent a sportsman. Fortunately his hostess was so much of a country lady, and so well accustomed to surrender her ear and interest to the details of others, that she was am-

ply enabled to satisfy his curiosity; and he was fortunate in deriving more information from her observing mind, respecting the annual appearance of the woodcocks, than he had obtained from the whole united legion of the Willersdale keepers; the sportsman of Daly House having been absent for some days at the county sessions.

"I am sorry that my intelligence on the subject should be so limited," said Lady Theodosia; "and still more so, because I fear my nephew, Mr. Mitford, will not visit the lodge this winter. He would have gladly offered himself as your guide and companion; although, perhaps, as he is apt to pass half a day up to his knees in a marsh, (we studiously avoid the name of *bog*) in pursuit of ducks, you might not have felt inclined to accept his society."

"Look at your brother, Lady Willersdale. See how his eyes sparkle at the mention of a gun! Now that is the innate gladiatorship of mankind."

But Helen's eyes were otherwise occupied.

She was struck by perceiving that on the mention of Harry Mitford's name, or rather on the announcement of his expected absence, all Florence Dudley's beautiful bloom had vanished from her face. In another minute, she filled herself a glass of water and drank it in silence.

"And what is to become of Harry, if we are to be denied the light of his countenance?" inquired Lady Isabella.

"Mitford has procured him a commission in the —th; he will be gazetted, and assume his duties as aid-de-camp at the castle, next week."

"Why could not the General wait till after our visit? A new subject for ill-will between us;—*aussi je lui en ferai la guerre tout de bon.* And here he comes, with those iligant boots of his,—which make themselves audible to my lords and gentlemen at the distance of half a mile. *Puissances d'amour! qui voudroit d'un mari qui ne se fait pas chausser à Londres.*"

Her own husband, whose boots were as silently musical as his silver-tongued self was musically loquacious, entered as she spoke; ac-

companied by General Mitford, who welcomed his young military guest with professional cordiality. Captain Mordaunt had served as a youngster in those final campaigns of the war, which had left General Mitford a veteran; and both were soon earnestly engaged with army-list facts, and Horse-Guards conjectures.

Meanwhile, Mr. Vyvyan had seated himself between Lady Willersdale and his wife; and was displaying that matchless set of teeth, whose perpetual and smiling disclosure had obtained him the reputation of being one of the most amiable and best-humoured men on earth. A bland and winning urbanity of manner had also acquired for him in society, the ironical title of "Count Vyvyan;" but in spite of his emptiness, and egotism, and selfish sensuality, he was really an agreeable companion; always *au courant du jour;* always willing to be amused; well-bred, and well-looking; and current in all the best society of Paris and London. Unfortunately, Helen was unable to yield her attention to the ingenious politeness with which

he contrived to give a favourable picture of General Mitford's compaign among the turnips; for Miss Dudley, gently whispering a request for a moment's conversation with her friend, drew her towards the window.

"Dear Lady Willersdale! can you manage to take me home with you."

"Certainly! but what will Lady Theodosia think of such a proposal?"

"That I am very capricious, and yourself too indulgent;—but I really must get away from hence. Say what you *can* or *will* for me;—but procure my release."

"A message from Mr. Edwards?"

"No! they know that he is going from home to-night, and can only too well spare me. Say that you want me *yourself*, and Lady Isabella will instantly attribute my acquiescence to a desire of seeing more of your brother;—even that opinion would not annoy me so much as remaining at the lodge."

Florence's prediction was verified to the letter. Little Algernon's lamentations on the announce-

ment of her departure with Lady Willersdale, were not so vociferous or so importunate, as his mother's hints of a forthcoming flirtation. But Captain Mordaunt was engaged with the General in the storming of St. Sebastian's; and before the breach was accomplished, Miss Dudley was equipped for her journey and taking leave of Lady Theodosia Mitford, to whom the unexplained motive of her sudden departure seemed perfectly intelligible:—for she folded her in her arms with even more than her ordinary fervency of affection.

It was arranged between the gentlemen, that Captain Mordaunt was to make his appearance in his shooting-jacket at the General's breakfast table, on the following morning; and the little party separated in better spirits than they had met, and with an agreeable plan for an early reunion.

CHAPTER VIII.

Ros. Never talk to me! I *will* weep. Have I not cause to weep?

Cel. As good as one could desire.

Ros. But why did he swear he would come this morning, and comes not?

Cel. He attends here on the Duke your father.

Ros. What talk we of fathers, when there is such a man as Orlando?

As you like It.

"How do you like her?" inquired Lady Willersdale of her brother, as they were proceeding together up the great staircase of the Castle, at the summons of the dressing bell.

"A more affected personage I never had the misfortune to encounter. Oh! that mincing affectation! If women did but know how utterly it revolts the sex to which it is thrown out as

an allurement. By heavens! I would rather marry a dairy-maid than a Parisian coquette!"

"*Aha! nous y voila!*—we were at cross purposes, my dear brother; nor could I by any means concur in your strictures as applied to Florence Dudley."

"I should think not! for Miss Dudley appears a genuine piece of simplicity; very beautiful!—and when I have eaten a cutlet in her company, and heard the sound of her voice, I will answer your question with all due sincerity;—but I fear she is too handsome to be agreeable."

Helen, somewhat provoked by Captain Mordaunt's indifference, turned *en passant* into Lord Willersdale's private study, to give an account of her morning's excursion, and inquire into his own occupations. She found him in the act of closing his London letters, and with too harassed an expression on his countenance to admit of her intended communications.

"Dearest Willersdale! has any thing occurred to vex you? You look as perplexed and

fatigued as if you had been studying the national solvency!"

"I am indeed perplexed," he replied, imprinting a kiss upon the fair forehead which was inclined to meet him. "But by a question more personal, and fortunately far less weighty. The post has brought me twenty letters from England—Italy—Dublin!—all bearing a similar burthen."

"That the Delvile administration is at an end!—and that you must resume the slavery of office!" exclaimed Helen, with an air of grievous disappointment. "Then Mordaunt was right!"

"Piano—piano! my dearest girl. The seven-leagued boots of your imagination outstrip all my calculations. Things are not at present so near a crisis;—and it is only through the political telescope that a coming storm has been discerned. At present the Delvile party is disunited—not dissolved;—but it would appear that they do not '*diviser pour régner*;' but *diviser pour tomber en décadence*. Seymour

has resigned, and Harberton; Lord Vane, Sir Robert Vascall, and two or three others of lesser note."

"And all these odious letters tend to persuade you that the old crazy vehicle of the state, which has been *embourbé* by bad driving, can only be rescued by your active shoulder at the wheel!"

"Even so!—and indeed I see little chance of escape. We must positively be in town before the meeting of Parliament."

"Alas! alas!—and I had the prospect of such a happy sociable winter here!"

"And yet, dearest Helen!" said Lord Willersdale, fondly approaching her, "it is my apprehension that you will find too much gratification in your return to town, which alone, or chiefly, renders the prospect unwelcome to my feelings. I own I dread the certainty of seeing you surrounded by those whose homage has already proved so pernicious, and whose flatteries were once potent to raise a cloud of distrust between our hearts!"

"You have no right to indulge in such unseemly fancies now; altered as I am—and at length sure of my dominion over myself—I cannot allow you to think so slightly of my prudence."

"Nay—nay! if I find you so self-confident, I shall become still more alarmed. Rely upon your own unassisted discretion, and you are lost indeed!"

"Your doubts are so insulting," replied Helen, smiling at his vehemence, "that I shall not degrade myself by asking the favour at your hands which I have been lately meditating."

"You will nevertheless most assuredly make your demand:—because you are aware that it will be *as* assuredly granted."

"Well then—since you promise compliance—may I invite dear Florence to accompany us to England?"

Lord Willersdale paused for a moment in silent consideration. "On many accounts," he replied, "I should derive as much pleasure as yourself from such a circumstance; but I ap-

prize you that you have far less chance of obtaining the sanction of her guardian."

"You are then in Mr. Edwards's confidence."

"Not more so than yourself. The secrets of other men are always sacred in my eyes; but that of a friend is supremely so. I should as soon have thought of picking Edwards's pocket, as of distressing him by an indiscreet inquiry on the subject."

"You know at least that Florence is not his daughter?"

"But nothing further. When I first met Edwards at the university of Göttingen, nearly twenty years ago, he was one of the handsomest fellows I ever beheld; and although my junior, already a distinguished scholar. I was about to proceed on the tour of Europe, and would willingly have insured the society of so charming a companion; but he declined my proposal with the acknowledgment that he was recalled to England by a matrimonial engagement. A few years afterwards, just as I had succeeded to my estates, I received an application from

my former friend, requesting a presentation to any Irish living, however small, I might have in my gift; and to my astonishment I discovered that Edwards was willing to resign a very lucrative family living in the north of England, in order to insure this apparently undesirable object. I replied by making him my chaplain and my librarian, as some compensation for the insufficiency of the only rectory immediately at my disposal; and on my first visit to the castle, I was equally pained and astonished by finding him a gray-headed, broken-hearted man;—with little Florence climbing about his knees."

"And a widower?"

"No! Helen!—in reply to my looks of sympathy, he acquainted me that his hopes had been prematurely blighted; and that the child had no claims of kindred upon his affection."

A modest tap at the door from Mr. Vernon, now apprised Lord Willersdale that it was time to dress for the second bell; and Helen, however reluctantly, was compelled to defer her

further inquiries on a subject deeply interesting to her feelings. She was anxious, too, to communicate and consult with Florence on the probability of obtaining Mr. Edwards's consent to a scheme, which she could not for a moment doubt would prove agreeable to Miss Dudley herself. After dinner, therefore, having persuaded her to desert the vast saloon for the little cozy *boudoir*, in which the increasing chillness of the winter evenings had induced Lord Willersdale and herself to instal themselves when alone, she placed her friend beside her in the warmest nook of this luxurious temple of sociability, and was about to unfold her project, when Miss Dudley's unusual air of dejection struck her for the first time, and silenced her in a moment.

"I am glad we are to pass the evening here," observed Florence calmly; "I was fearful that you might feel inclined to amuse Captain Mordaunt with music, and I have so bad a headache, that for the first time I should have been obliged to refuse my assistance."

"You have a headache only because you are unhappy, dearest Florence. But you will not tell me why—nor dare I ask you."

"I *will* tell you why, and without a single inquiry; because I shall console myself by the disclosure, and because I feel that my whole confidence is due to your kindness, your *indulgent* kindness towards me. In the first place—dear Lady Willersdale—even from the little you see and know of my position, you must acknowledge that I should be insensible indeed, were I not deeply penetrated by its loneliness—by its mysterious degradation. In spite of my guardian's increasing affection and paternal care, I know from his own lips, that I am nothing *to him;* nor can I gather from his reserve that I am aught to any other on this earth! I know not that my blood runs in the veins of living mortal; and were I to lose my solitary protector, my desolation would be terrible indeed! Once or twice, moved by this painful apprehension, and overwhelmed by the mortifications suggested by my own sensitive imagination, I have ventured to

approach this forbidden subject in my conversations with Mr. Edwards."

"It was a justice which you owed to yourself. And the result?"

"Alas! the merest hint upon the subject of my parentage, has ever been sufficient to distract him with such an agony of painful reminiscence, that I have as instantly shrunk from my attempt. I would rather endure any degree of suffering than inflict a single pang upon my kind, generous, unfailing friend. There have been times, indeed, when my own mind has become careless or tranquillized upon the subject. The motherly tenderness bestowed on me from my childhood by Lady Theodosia, has served to re-assure me; the habit of constant occupation inculcated by my guardian, has left me no leisure for the effusions of idle sensibility!—and although you frequently reproach me with my gravity, I believe there are few persons so easily pleased, or more disposed towards happiness than myself.—I love what I behold,

The night that calms—the day that cheers,
The common growth of mother-earth
Sufficeth me;—her tears—her mirth—
Her humblest mirth and tears."

"Your quotation, however, verifies my opinion,—*not* that you are too grave, but too reflective for your age."

"Perhaps so!—I have lived in the society of a very serious man;—or in a still more intense and solemn intercourse with the solitude of nature. Lady Theodosia's raillery has, I believe, alone preserved me from the ridicule of growing absurdly romantic. But to return to my personal grievances. You have not, I am persuaded, my dear Lady Willersdale, passed two months within reach of the gossipry of Daly House, without learning that Lady Theodosia is not the only one of the Mitford family who regards me with interest."

"In her second interview, Mrs. Daly vouchsafed to inform me that her son and Harry Mitford were rivals for the honour of your smiles."

"For once her words were true. And was

she equally communicative on the subject of my preference."

"She insinuated that you had exhibited a very impertinent indifference towards the pretensions of William Daly."

"She is mistaken—I am far from indifferent towards him;—he is one of the few persons towards whom I cherish a positive dislike. William Daly is as clear and acute as his mother is deficient in understanding; but he is also as deficient in candour and excellence of disposition, as his father is pre-eminently gifted with those sterling qualities."

Lady Willersdale began to suspect that Florence, in her confession of *hate*, was trying to evade an acknowledgment of the state of her *affections*;—but she was mistaken.

"Towards Harry Mitford, on the contrary," continued Miss Dudley without a blush or a sigh, "I entertain as strong a preference, as positive a feeling of *love*—since that word only is permitted to define the intimacy I would describe—as positive a feeling of love as can be

proved by a girl, who has never permitted herself, or been permitted by others, to indulge in the contemplation of any idle or unavailing sentiment. He has been my companion from childhood; and I could wish him to remain so, through girlhood, and womanhood, and old age. He has always been my champion and protector—he still seeks no higher distinction;—is content to overlook my poverty—my doubtful birth, my degradation,—and to make me his wife! Yet his generosity, and our mutual feelings are, and must remain, without effect. Dependence binds him to the authority of his uncle, and gratitude insures on my part an equal submission. We have separated, in short, with a mutual agreement to regard our childish engagement at an end."

Miss Dudley's breath grew short as she spoke, and Helen considerately affected to occupy herself with some *bijouterie* scattered on a neighbouring table.

"Judge therefore, dear Lady Willersdale," resumed the agitated Florence, after a short

pause—" judge whether I may be excused for contemplating with some bitterness of spirit, and with deep affliction, the position—the mystery—the dishonour, which divides me from the plighted lover of my early faith. Believe me, I do not indulge in peevish dejection;—you have seen me eager in my ordinary occupations, and sincerely seeking to derive impulses of cheerfulness from your own happy gaiety and condescending friendship."

" For the future, Florence, I shall know how to admire and applaud your exertions and self-control."

" But at times circumstances arise that disgracefully overcome my fortitude. Although I have taught myself to regard Harry as one who will hereafter become no more to me than an esteemed and faithful friend;—although I have already begun to *think* of him as well as to name him as *Mr. Mitford;* still, unconsciously or blindly, I have been looking forward to the annual period of our reunion. I own I have

anxiously longed to see him here again, if only as a neighbour and acquaintance. I have been so long accustomed to guess, to consult, and sometimes to attempt the conversion of his opinion with respect to persons and things!—Whatever or whoever I meet of new or strange, interests me in a minor degree, till I have noted their influence on himself;—and then I am so eager he should admire all whom I admire,—and love those who are kind to me!—For many weeks past, I have been anticipating the moment of his acquaintance with yourself—with Lord Willersdale; trusting that his gratitude towards your indulgence might still serve to prove lingering interest for——"

In spite of all her self-command, Miss Dudley's confessions were interrupted by a gush of tears; while Lady Willersdale, throwing her arms around her neck, attempted to comfort and re-assure her.

"And are you certain that all hope of his Christmas visit is at an end? My poor Flo-

rence! Surely Mr. Mitford will not regard the distance between Dublin and Mitford Lodge, as an obstacle to his journey."

"Lady Theodosia's allusions to the subject convince me that the General has issued some strong prohibition against his appearance here. Nor is it alone my own selfish disappointment which causes the tears I can no longer conceal from a friend so kind as yourself. I can perceive that both the General and dearest Lady Theodosia are equally grieved and vexed by the prospect of Harry's unaccustomed absence. *Both* love him as a son,—and as he deserves to be loved; he is adored on the estate; nor is there an improvement or a change which is not previously referred to his judgment. As to himself—to his own feelings—his passion for Mitford Lodge, and for his long adopted home, is something more than romantic. And this exile,—the first from his early childhood at this home-loving, home-seeking season,—will be equally painful to him, and to a whole cluster of those to whom his excellent qualities have

endeared him. And *I*—Lady Willersdale,—*I* am the solitary origin of the mischief! So long as poor inoffensive Florence Dudley remains at Willersdale Rectory,—Harry Mitford must live in banishment!"

"Console yourself then, my dearest Florence; for the period depends upon yourself. This very evening I had proposed disclosing to you a favourite plan of mine; which your present dilemma may possibly incline you to approve. In another month we leave the castle—Lord Willersdale's public duties summon him to London. Will you oblige and gratify us both by becoming our inmate till we return to Galway in the summer?"

Miss Dudley involuntarily clasped her hands at this startling proposition; and the flush which had suddenly suffused her cheeks, subsided as rapidly into a death-like paleness.

"You are too kind—too considerate!" she exclaimed. "But to desert my guardian's lonely fireside!—to leave my valued friend, Lady Theodosia!—and, above all, to rush into that

supercilious London world, wherein my insignificance would be so misplaced, and so utterly despised!"

"That apprehension at least you may spare yourself," replied Helen. "It is not many months ago since I too appeared for the first time in society; and as complete a stranger as yourself. I had pictured to myself a terrible encounter with the pride and scorn and ridicule of the exclusive set in which I was destined to move; when, to my amazement, I found it more than indulgent; too self-engrossed to heed my deficiencies,—too eager to mould me to its purposes to dream of repelling me by fastidious coldness. Believe me, it is only in the inferior orders of society, that consequence is assumed through an over-tenacious examination into the qualifications and pretensions of others. It is a failing characteristic of supremely *mauvais ton*."

"My own limited experience certainly confirms your opinion. Mrs. Daly alone has attempted to wound and insult my personal feelings; while yourself and Lady Theodosia have attempted rather to raise me to your own level."

"And what chance, dear Florence, has my invitation, of procuring the sanction of Mr. Edwards, in the event of your own acquiescence."

"My guardian, as I need scarcely inform you, is a person wholly actuated by religious principle in every action and every thought. No prospect tending to my worldly advantage, or personal gratification, would bribe him to any other than the most serious consideration of the question. But Lady Theodosia's counsels have great weight with him, on any point relating exclusively to female education or management; and she has frequently, in my hearing, expressed her regrets at the secluded life to which I am restrained, and at the difficulties I might hereafter encounter from my ignorance of men and manners. I am therefore assured that she would regard my visit to England, in your society, as an unappreciable advantage."

"And yourself, love! Am I equally secure of *your* support when I prefer my request to Mr. Edwards?"

"Dearest Lady Willersdale! pardon my momentary irresolution; and believe that I view

this project as a future source of comfort and happiness to myself and others. So long as I reside amid this old familiar scenery, what chance have I of learning to forget my youthful companion, or of restoring Harry to his family? But during my absence, Lady Theodosia will receive the consolation of his society; he will in some degree replace me with my guardian, who loves him as a son;—and I shall escape at once the importunities of William Daly, and the impertinent reflections of his odious mother."

"To-morrow night, then, I will hazard my request. Lord Willersdale and my brother are off at day-dawn to a county meeting; Mr. Edwards and Mr. Daly accompany them home to dinner; *et puis—nous verrons!*"

CHAPTER IX.

Go to! thou talkest nothing.—*Shakspeare.*

And on the following evening, notwithstanding the dire phantasma of dreadful roads—of a set of blood-horses, and even of Lady Isabella Vyvyan's imaginary white boys, and carders, with which Helen and her friend contrived mutually to depress each other's spirits during the solitude of a rainy morning, the Willersdale carriage, with its four welcome inmates, made its appearance scarcely a quarter of an hour after the appointed moment. A fine moonlight night had favoured their return.

Lady Willersdale, whose heart was eagerly involved in the question of Florence's visit, regarded the ceremony of dinner as endlessly tedious. She could scarcely listen to Captain

Mordaunt's very original description of the humours of an Irish mob; or even to Mr. Daly's exulting assurances of the universal enthusiasm, which had marked Lord Willersdale's reception. He favoured her indeed with the heads of his lordship's speech—duly subdivided by the notes of admiration conveyed by the "*Hear! hears!*" of the meeting; but Helen's apprehensive observation was fixed meanwhile upon the earnest gaze of parental tenderness, with which Mr. Edwards was occupied in contemplating the countenance of his own dear Florence, and the affectionate attention with which he noted her every word and every action.

Lady Willersdale already desponded over her probabilities of success; and no sooner did she escape from the dining-room, and find herself once more *tête-à-tête* with Florence Dudley, than she began to consult her upon the eligibility of preferring her petition to Mr. Edwards, through the medium of Lady Theodosia Mitford.

An audible tap at the window of the saloon, which was only slightly elevated above the lawn,

startled Miss Dudley from her reply; and before they could mutually express their surprise and alarm, the signal was distinctly repeated. Lady Willersdale hastily rung the bell to summon assistance; but while Mr. Vernon was passing a pocket-comb through the curls of his perfumed crop preparatory to his appearance, the great hall-door was heard to creak upon its hinges, and footsteps rushed along the marble vestibule. Lady Willersdale clung to Miss Dudley for support, as the door of the saloon was stealthily opened; and a strange, black, incomprehensible looking head intruded itself into the chamber.

Again the terrified Helen applied herself vehemently to the bell-rope; but an irrepressible burst of laughter from the door, announcing Lady Isabella Vyvyan, dissolved the spell of her alarms.

"Were ever two such heroines!" exclaimed Lady Isabella, throwing aside the vitchoura, and boa, and snow shoes, in which her pretty person was disguised. "*You*, my fair Florence, are perfectly Niobized;—Mrs. Siddons's Paulina

was not half so marble! and as to Lady Willersdale — unhappy creatures! you have never seen Mademoiselle Duchesnois's scene of the bloody heart in Gabrielle de Vergy, or you would know how to estimate the only true prototype of her shudderings!—But, my dear Lady Willersdale, you really look faint—fetch some *eau de Cologne*—some sugar—call Lady Willersdale's maid!" screamed Lady Isabella, terrified in her turn, to Vernon, who was now standing in astonished attendance.

"By no means!" said Helen, rallying her spirits. "A glass of water will suffice to restore the reputation of my courage;" and leaning back on the sofa, she gradually recovered her self-possession.

"Believe me, I had no intention of alarming you," said Lady Isabella, distressed by the consequences of her indiscretion into a more rational mood. "I have the vanity to believe my follies so generally known and appreciated, that I conclude the mere announcement of my arrival in any place, is all potent to affix the name of

Belle Vyvyan to every absurd and unaccountable event occurring in the neighbourhood. Florence there, who is better acquainted with my freaks, ought to have perceived at once that I was hovering in the air."

"But to cross the river at this late hour at this inclement season!" expostulated Helen.

"The finest moonlight that ever shone on the waves!—and see!" pointing to the mass of furs, of which she had dismantled herself, "think you that even the hammer of the northern Thor could have crushed me under such a suit of sables?"

"But you surely did not venture alone?"

"And so leave poor Vyvyan to be documented to death by my sage sister, and stentorian brother-in-law?—Oh! no! I choose him to remain my own especial martyr. To say the truth, dear Lady Willersdale—shall I say the truth? I fancy there is nothing so hazardous, or so unbecoming to the lips!—to acknowledge a melancholy fact—I am bored to utter extermination at the lodge. Hitherto we have al-

ways had Harry Mitford's society to enliven us; and Florence, if she would open her prudish lips, could tell you that he is a very endurable personage. And then when Harry was with us, we were pretty sure of having Florence too. *Ne boude pas, ma petite Flo! c'est une vérité incontestable.* But now we are reduced to two conjugal couple,—a measure of society which petrifies one with the dulness of a perpetual *rubber!* We are two pair to *fight* indeed, as well as play; but then we want an umpire to award the victory."

"And to which among us are you about to address yourself for such a service?" inquired Helen.

"Oh! my pugnacious impulses have been chilled into repose by the night-air. We have been confined all day by the rain—Dosy, Vyvyan, and I;—the General was most opportunely engaged to a public meeting at Bally-na-rogue, or Bally-na something or other; and Theodosia profited by his absence to become more than usually oratorical on the subject of

poor little Algy's misdemeanours and neglected education. Of course I was a solitary counsel for the defence. Vyvyan only shows his teeth on such occasions—not to *bite*, but to exhibit one of his incredulous simpers. I grew angry, and peevish, and recriminative; abused *you*, Florence, as I knew the Shannon was between us;—but only to plague my sister."

"And have you quarrelled with Lady Theodosia in right good earnest?" inquired Helen, more amused than surprised.

"Quarrelled?—That is an honour I do to no one but my husband. No!—I was simply bored to the uttermost—*excédée à toute ou trance:* so at the coming signal of the General's creaking boots, I jumped up in despair, and defying all Dosy's remonstrances, wrapt myself up, and persuaded Vyvyan to come and enjoy the moonlight with me on the river. A bright after-thought suggested to me to finish my evening here; to ascertain whether *one* agreeable fireside is to be found in the county of Galway. Vyvyan is gone to the gentlemen—*et me voici!*"

" Now that my terrors are re-assured, I begin to rejoice in your frolic, and admire your enterprize."

" Pray, reward it with some coffee; for in spite of my valour, and my vitschoura, I am horribly afraid of catching cold."

Mr. Vernon and his suite entered as she spoke; and, wholly regardless of their united inspection, Lady Isabella began to elevate towards the fire her pretty little feet, of which the *chaussure mignonne* might fully warrant the external defence of snow boots.—

" Well! my dear Lady Willersdale," she resumed, between the double labours of scorching her shoes, and sipping her coffee, " has Florence recovered the fit of the pouts in which she escaped my clutches yesterday?—What do you do with her here? Not spoil her, and heroinize her like my sister, I trust.—Now, don't be 'rageous, Flo! you never look better than in a fit of sublime indignation, like the present moment; but I do not choose you to remain always in *alt*; believe me, this dirty world is

quite good enough for such people as you and I to walk upon. It is only the *Landes*, which afford an excuse for living on stilts."

"To show you that I am neither 'rageous, nor in the clouds, pray let me inquire after my little play-fellow. How has Algernon borne this trying rainy day?"

"Don't ask me!—don't name him!—I have heard of nothing but him and his sins since breakfast time. But tell me, child, is Lady Willersdale in one of her best and most placable humours? Is she likely to grant a request, however unreasonable?"

"I have scarcely yet heard Lady Willersdale deny a petition;—but"—

"But—Lady Isabella Vyvyan's, you would add, are seldom of a nature to be judged by precedents. *N'importe*—for once I will trust to the simplest eloquence. Lady Willersdale, I want you to resuscitate the decidedly defunct inhabitants of this awfully dull neighbourhood, by giving us a ball."

"*A ball!*" exclaimed Helen, starting from

her sofa; "You might as well ask for a cabinet council. Where do you suppose we should find the *matériel* for such a convocation?"

"Where speaks the proverb—

> In the east and the west,
> And the old crow's nest.

At Daly House—Mitford Lodge—Willersville Rectory,—always begging Florence's pardon for applying the latter epithet to Mr. Edwards."

"But even these will furnish us with only a dozen guests."

"In addition to your own party, Barton is expected at the Lodge to-morrow, and William Daly always brings us a host of young Dublinites at Christmas. Then you have cavalry barracks at Ballynarogue; you have the O'Gormans at the Priory, with all their '*caastle*' airs and fineries; you have Muntingford, who, though he cannot discreetly *receive* visitors, can *visit*, and very much to the purpose; and in the neighbourhood of Clonfert, you have the Bishop of ——'s widow, with her three sentimental daughters, and the Surfaces."

"Of whom I never heard before."

"Lady Isabella alludes to Lady Sophia Denny's family," observed Miss Dudley.

"To Lady Sophia—who having passed her last thirty years in the daily and hourly exercise of lying, has at last wholly forgotten the distinction of truth. She is quite perplexed when a fact is plainly stated in her presence, and is miserable till she takes it into her own hands, to be embellished by her *broderies*. The study of her existence is to keep up appearances, and make a show out of shreds and patches; and her long exercise of the art has positively blunted all her perceptions. She neither thinks nor feels; but makes a pretence of thinking and feeling, just as may happen to suit her views towards her audience; wherefore I always make bold to designate her as the Lady Sophia Surface."

"And the Bishop's wife?"

"Oh, pretty much like other bishop's wives; wears a slate-coloured gown, and casts up her weekly bills; a sort of millstone hanged about

the right reverend's neck, during his plebeian days of non-preferment."

"Mrs. Maynard and her daughters are highly accomplished women," interrupted Miss Dudley. "I have heard Lady Theodosia mention them as having lived in the very first English society."

"*Je ne dis pas que non!—Mais sous votre bon plaisir, ma petite Flo,—je tiens avec mon ami de la Chaussée d'Antin—ce cher Anatole de Biron!—que la bonne societé Anglaise se compose de nullités, et de femmes légères! Vous ne connoissez point chez vous, cet aimable beau milieu qui fait le charme des coteries Parisiennes! Vous avez en attendant d'excellentes mères de famille,—telles que cette Episcopale dont il est question; ou des effrontées sans moeurs,—telles que votre Duchesse de Delvile, qu'on ne recevroit point à Paris, crainte de choquer les bienséances!*"

"Pray admire how Lady Isabella takes refuge in her French, as if it were the only jargon

wherein to envelope a sophistry," said Miss Dudley.

"Hush, child—hush! never let me hear you use such hard words, unless you are addressing Father O'Daly, the Jesuit, or the accomplished Felicia. But to return to the ball—the forlorn hope of my Christmas visit;—what chance my dear Lady Willersdale?"

"What says Lady Theodosia to the project?"

"Of course that it will be a very popular measure. I have not yet, by the bye, said one word to her on the subject; but I can preassure you, that she will make some such sententious comment in approval."

"I will consult Lord Willersdale without delay; and then—"

"Consult Lord Willersdale! 'why this is a more exquisite joke than the other.' And without delay!—no, in mercy wait till we are gone;—ever while you live, avoid an audience for your matrimonial *démêlés*. And hush, I

hear them coming. What have you here?" continued Lady Isabella, flying towards a case of new books, which had been taken from Lord Willersdale's carriage, and bearing the London mark.—"What have we here?—Annuals, annuals,—annuals!—The splendid toys of modern blueism; a whim which you have borrowed from the Parisians, gilding *their* refined gold, and perfuming *their* violets, till you have made them ridiculous. In France, one hears nothing of the *almanachs* till the auspicious *jour des étrennes;* when they are presented as a *gage d'amitié*, or as a *gage d'amour;* and after exhibiting their gilding and morocco for a week on the drawing-room table, they are degraded to the ante-room, for the amusement of any sentimental *valet de chambre* who may have a taste for 'stanzas on the last rose,' or 'lines to an early swallow.'—Now in England—am I not right my lord?" she inquired of Lord Willersdale, who, with the other gentlemen, had entered during her *tirade;* and to whom, although they had not met for years, she simply extended

a finger in the way of greeting; "in England, the annuals have produced an epidemic fever; and some of your *dilettanti* statesmen, who luxuriate in minor legislation, have even thought of bringing in a bill——"

"To prevent the Christmas roses from blowing before Midsummer. Very true, my dear Lady Isabella; no one is so well informed on constitutional subjects as yourself."

"I see you have a volume or two of French memoirs; matter-of-fudge books,—as I always call such as are not matter-of-fact;—and those you must lend to *me*. I consider one of the truest luxuries of civilized winter life, to be a warm dressing-room,—with an easy chair, a *douillette ouatée*, a new novel steaming from the press, and a sufficiently sharp mother-of-pearl paper-knife!"

"Your ladyship forgot to particularize that the work should be *Parisian*. An English novel insures the heaviness of boards, and the *mauvaise odeur* of sour paste," said Lord Willersdale sarcastically.

"Oh, as to an English modern novel, with its my Lord Dukes, and Sir Harrys, and caricatures of the *beau monde*, I hold its vulgarity and bad taste as secondary only to that of the columns of your newspapers after a drawing-room;—which announce to admiring Europe, that Lady Alberville wore a train of Pomona green; and that some old withered Marchioness, who has been morally defunct these twenty years, arose from the catacombs in the identical robe of crimson velvet which ought to have been covering her coffin."

"We have perhaps had more than enough of fashionable novels," replied Lord Willersdale; "but as the amber which serves to preserve the ephemeral modes and caprices of the passing day, they have their value. They will prove to a following generation what the comedies of Congreve, and Cibber, and Farquhar, have proved to ourselves. It is from the ashes of our long extinguished high-life comedy, that this swarm of triflers has arisen; but it was the

bent of the public taste which originally called it into existence."

"The worst fault of such productions," observed the bland and smiling Mr. Vyvyan, "is the distortion of their portraiture; the writers or painters generally move in so base a sphere, that their upturned and wondering eyes necessarily disfigure the objects of their art. Were it not for Lady Mary Wortley's contemporary letters, we should accept Richardson's Lovelace as the *beau idéal* of the fine gentleman of his day; whereas we learn that the whole M. family were regarded at the time as a vulgar outrage upon fashionable life. And lately, the Memoirs of Richelieu, and others of the court of Louis XV., have assured us that the heroes of Marmontel, airy and graceful as they are, have not the slightest affinity with the originals they were intended to delineate."

"That Richardson from his shop, and Marmontel from his *mansarde*, may have viewed the world of fashion in a disproportionate light, I

can well conceive. But ours is the age of aristocratic literature; and such novels as Tremaine, Granby, Pelham—"

"Tremaine!—that moralizing driveller!" interrupted Lady Isabella.

"A driveller of *aqua fortis!*" replied Lord Willersdale.

"And Pelham!—with its sparkling conceits, that blind one, as though the pages were dried with diamond dust!"

"You did not conclude your observation," said Mr. Edwards, to Lord Willersdale, perceiving that Florence had been an attentive listener.

"Such novels, and many others, form a mere reflexion of the scenes hourly passing around their writers; and are a valuable addition to our lighter literature. Were the author of Anastasius to favour us with a modern novel, for instance—its truth would necessarily equal its miraculous graphic force. A novel of fashionable life does not pre-suppose a tissue of puerile vulgarity."

"We never hear Miss Edgeworth's 'Vivian,'

or 'Absentee' classed among fashionable novels," observed Mr. Edwards. "Conveying a great moral lesson, we *feel* their end and aim, and are regardless of the scenery of the drama."

"You are growing too didactic for *me*," exclaimed Lady Isabella, escaping from the group. "Florence my dear, some music. Captain Mordaunt, pray take her to the harp, or the harp to her; for I have only a quarter of an hour to listen to her syrenship, before I go home to be scolded.—And now, my dear Lady Willersdale, admit me back to a corner of your sofa; that I may whisper my adieus under cover of Miss Dudley's preliminary *arpeggio*. My last and most potent argument in favour of our ball, still remains unspoken."

CHAPTER X.

There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,
The earth and every common sight,
To me did seem
Apparelled in celestial light,
The glory and the freshness of a dream!
It is not now as it has been of yore.
Turn wheresoe'er I may,
By night, or day,
The things that I have seen I now can see no more.
The sunshine is a glorious birth!
But yet I know where'er I go,
That there hath passed away a glory from the earth.

WORDSWORTH.

THIS last mysterious argument proved all-persuasive in Lady Willersdale's ears; but previous to communicating the project of the new year's ball, which was now as agreeable to herself as to Lady Isabella, to the solitary person whose concurrence was necessary on the

occasion, she determined on addressing to Mr. Edwards a petition far more intimately connected with her happiness. Profiting by the confusion of the Vyvyans' departure, she drew him aside; and, somewhat incoherently, disclosed her views respecting Miss Dudley's visit to London, and her earnest hope of obtaining his consent and approbation.

The amiable Helen had long accustomed herself to regard the pastor of Willersville with admiring respect. The purity of his blameless and frugal existence, his habits of active benevolence, his authority as a teacher of the word of God—an authority exerted with equal dignity and humility,—had served to sanctify in her eyes the partial predilection entertained for him by her husband. From *his* lips she had gathered lessons of wisdom hitherto unknown or disregarded; his persuasive and even awful eloquence had first impressed upon her mind the sacrilege of inattention and indifference in a spot such as that which weekly united them; and during her residence at the Castle, Lady

Willersdale had been gradually hiving within her bosom a store of holy treasure, gathered from his precepts, and from the example of Lady Theodosia Mitford.

But while her mind had been captivated by the tone of Mr. Edwards's pulpit admonitions, her personal feelings had been repelled by the changeless gravity of his demeanour in private life. Mr. O'Daly, despite a similar sanctity of calling and of conduct, had contrived to win upon her confidence by his sinuous adulation, and by the vivacity of general intelligence which animated his conversation; but the Protestant pastor had still retained his original silence and sternness in her presence. Evidently regarding her as one of the spoiled children of the world, and as nothing more, he had not cared to relax for her sake the severity of a brow on which early sorrow had affixed an iron seal; or to reveal to her frivolous scrutiny, the rich stores of a mind brightened by some of the noblest impulses of humanity. Grateful for the kindnesses she had bestowed upon his ward, he was

also fully aware of the value of Miss Dudley's society to Lady Willersdale herself; and while he secretly rejoiced in their friendship, he had never regretted the reserve maintained towards him by the youthful wife of his patron.

With these prejudices operating upon her feelings, Helen was most agreeably surprised by the courteous gentleness, as well as by the air of profound emotion, with which Mr. Edwards listened to her request. She beheld the brow which she had secretly reprobated as cold, flushed with a glow of sensibility—the eyes which she had shunned as harsh and reproving, softened by rising tears; nay, even the usual tranquil *recueillement* of Mr. Edwards's address was moved to perturbation by a proposal at once so startling—so flattering to his ward—so momentous to her future happiness!—But the "hectic of a moment" faded as it came; these evidences of suppressed feeling were but of brief duration; and he became more than usually pale, and more than usually guarded, as he expressed in formal terms his acknow-

ledgments for the intended kindness of Lord and Lady Willersdale.

From his air, rather than from his words, the disappointed Helen gathered a negative to her wishes; for while he acknowledged his deep sense of the advantages arising to Miss Dudley from such an introduction into society, Mr. Edwards requested that time might be granted him to re-consider the possibility of allowing her to accept the obligation. Lady Willersdale plainly discerned his secret disinclination towards the scheme; and her only remaining hope suggested that he might possibly refer the case to the decision of Lady Theodosia Mitford.

With Lord Willersdale, meanwhile, her success was far less equivocal. More extensively acquainted than herself with the social capabilities of the neighbourhood, and with their claims upon his hospitality, he warmly applauded Lady Isabella's hasty project for a ball at the castle; acknowledging himself aware that some such exertion of festivity would be expected

in the county, on occasion of their first settlement in the home of his ancestors. In revising on the morrow the list of visitors sketched by their lively neighbour, he was enabled to add the names of a considerable number of families of respectability, overlooked by her exclusive predilections. Captain Mordaunt answered for a liberal attendance of the —th Hussars, who were quartered at Ballinaroy; "excellent fellows! with whom he had promised to go over and dine, and who would be delighted with the prospect of a ball;" and even secured an invitation for his particular friend Sir William de Broke, a brother officer, and Castle aid-de-camp; to whom a bed was offered at Willersdale for the occasion. Every body, in short, applauded!—Mrs. O'Mahoney began to entertain hopes of reviving the hospitality of the "ould ancient lards;" and Helen, who had long been her "darlin," already rivalled "Mr. Edwards's young lady" in her estimation; for which "*chère demoiselle—si aimable, et si prevenante, et qui parloit si bien Francois*," Ma-

demoiselle Florentine assiduously set about preparing a ball dress of white crape, *à la Dame Blanche.*

The invitations were already dispersed; Mrs. Daly was hastening the arrival of the O'Shaughnessy and her Felicia; William, with all his insinuating graces of address, had dined at the Castle, and delighted his partial father by obtaining Lord Willersdale's flattering encomiums;—and as to Lady Isabella, she was in a perfect fever of delight! It was astonishing how many families who had hitherto declared themselves beyond visiting distance of Willersville, found their way through bog, and briar, and mud, to angle for an invitation; it was astonishing to what an extent O'Gorman Priory threatened to stretch itself in favour of the Dublin visitors, with whom their party was to be reinforced; it was astonishing how the prejudices of party, and politics, and opposing creeds, dissolved before the magic talisman contained upon a five-inch square of pasteboard, bearing the hospitable compliments of Lord

and Lady Willersdale! Few things draw forth the dormant gregarious sympathies of a country neighbourhood so readily as the prospect of a ball.

But while Lady Isabella Vyvyan amused herself with assisting Lady Willersdale in the construction of a garland-ring *à la Russe*, to illuminate the vast saloon; while Vernon revised and re-revised his catalogue of accepted invitations; and Monsieur Laurent attempted to rival the fame of the classic Jarrin, by modelling in sugar the expedition of the Argonauts, and by constructing in *bonbons* the grotto of Antiparos, and the temples of Pæstum, Lady Theodosia Mitford was occupied by interests of a very different character.

On the day succeeding that on which she had welcomed with pleasure the news of Lady Willersdale's projected festivities, she had been surprised by a request for a private audience on the part of Mr. Edwards. Still more startling had been his intelligence of the views entertained by her neighbours at the Castle in

favour of his ward; and far more perplexing his reference to her own judgment, as to the eligibility of his acceptance of their proffered kindness.

"I will not disguise from you," replied Lady Theodosia, after some hesitation, "that I have long desired for our dear Florence a more extended acquaintance with the usages and pleasures of society. Her position, as dependent on your sole protection, is precarious; she is unfitted by temperament and by disposition to wrestle with the rougher evils of life; the sphere to which she is limited in Galway, offers few or no desirable oportunities for her permanent settlement; and I own, dear Sir, that I am anxious to see her speedily and happily married. But many circumstances, unknown to me, may weigh in your mind against sanctioning her introduction into society of the high *caste* to which her domestication with the Willersdales would naturally insure her admission. *You* alone are aware how far her personal claims might qualify dear Florence for any noble connexion offering

itself to her acceptance; and you would be too jealous of her dignity, too careful of her happiness, to expose her to the ignominy of rejection. Heaven knows I am far from wishing to intrude upon your confidence; I have forborne, indeed, under temptations much more exciting to my own feelings; but pardon me if I consider myself at present a very inefficient judge of the case."

"I had foreseen these objections," replied Mr. Edwards with emotion. "For some time past, I have been aware that my entire confidence on this painful subject was due to the generous protectress of my poor Florence. Your ladyship, however, will feel that my position with regard to the Mitford family has been one of peculiar delicacy; and that alone, believe me, has retarded my explanation with yourself. I feel," he continued, struggling with his words, "that I cannot talk much—that I cannot render myself *intelligible* on a topic connected with all that has been dearest and holiest to me on earth. You will forgive me, Lady

Theodosia, you will perhaps even think more kindly of me, when you have perused these papers."

Lady Theodosia Mitford bent forward to receive a packet which Mr. Edwards resigned with trembling hands.

"It was written, Madam, as an explanation to my ward, in the event of my premature decease;—it was written in the guileless outpouring of a heart anchored on a rock of hope, which renders the sneers of society an empty clamour.—Read it, dear Lady Theodosia, in the same indulgent, the same Christian spirit; —read it—and pity us both."

Mr. Edwards had left the room before his companion could nerve her courage to reply. Hastening to secure herself from intrusion in the solitude of her own chamber, Lady Theodosia, with eager and affectionate interest, immediately addressed herself to the perusal of the following—

MANUSCRIPT.

"I am about to recall remembrances of a period of my existence, which for my own sake —for the sake of others—I have long and studiously banished from my mind.—The task will be a bitter one! To review the actions of our youth, when the fond and fervid impulses that gave them birth have passed into the contemplative calmness of middle age; to judge the characters of others—not as when they stood before us invested with all the dreamy and imaginative excellence imported by our own buoyant spirits and inexperienced hearts, but viewed through the trying medium of dispassionate reason—becomes a painful disenchantment of the spells of memory; and the disappointed spirit, in self-revenge—in expiation of its early blindness,—is apt to invest its reminiscences in a thrice-rigid tone of condemnation. *The man*, the proud and Pharisaical man, scarcely dares whisper, even to himself—'thus loved, thus trusted, thus erred *the boy*'—ashamed to own

himself a dupe, or a falterer in the path, he takes refuge in reprobation of the universal follies and vices of his kind.

"My first effort, as a narrator, will be to divest myself of this ungenerous tone; or rather to resume, in my relation of facts, and description of persons, the spirit in which I then observed, and then acted. Vain thought!—as if the morning dew would vouchsafe to return and freshen the withered grass whereon its evanescent drops were glittering in the early twilight!—

"I was born of one of the border families of Northumberland; which, if not ennobled, retain in their hereditary worth, and opulence, and independence, a spirit of nobility beyond the influence of the breath of kings. I was a younger son,—but this did not diminish the propitious aspect of my destinies; for I had only one elder brother and one sister to diminish my patrimonial expectations. Besides, my father's estate was enriched with a family living of considerable value; and from my birth I was intended for the church. *Intended for the*

church!—a phrase of common parlance, which we have accustomed ourselves to hear without indignation.

"My father was a squire of the old school; a mirror of hospitality and tender mercy to the poor; and altogether as excellent a man as can exist on the foundation of a miserable education. Fortunately, his impulses were good; for principles either moral or religious, had never been instilled into his mind. During the last century there appears to have been a sort of general trust in the sufficiency of *hereditary* virtue among the wealthy and the well-descended; just as in France, the expression of '*un homme bien né*,' is used as synonymous with a man of honour. My father was a widower; and while he followed his hounds, or fulfilled his magisterial duties, his three children were left to their own devices, and to seek or make their own pleasures. My brother's predilections, at once worthy of his ancestry, and of their prospects of representation in his person, led him to the stable or the kennel.

He was already an expert swimmer, horseman, and wrestler; and in despite of his noble countenance and boyish symmetry,

> A savage wildness round him hung
> As of a dweller out of doors.

He spoke with the broad Northumberland accent; but the sentiments which it conveyed were spirited and manly as his sports;—my elder brother was in truth a fine-hearted, generous fellow.

"More delicately organized in body—a sickly mother had died in giving me birth—my own character and my own feelings were of a far less hardy cast. My sister was fortunate in the tender superintendance of an excellent old nurse, and while she sat by the knee of her simple monitress busily employed in her early labours of the needle, it was my untiring pleasure to bear them company with some huge folio in my lap, rather than share in my brother Hugh's boisterous diversions. If I remember, it was the old woman herself who had first taught me to read; and as among the neglected chambers

of my father's vast and rambling mansion, there chanced to be an extensive library, I was enabled to exercise her lessons with the most lawless self-indulgence. Half the volumes that fell under my hand were of course incomprehensible; but when I chanced upon a page of poetry or a romance of tolerable conciseness, it became my indulgence to read them aloud for the recreation of Dame Mildred and Sophia, as they sat at their stitchery. A ramble with these valued companions through the thorny glades, and deep ravines of the park, formed my alternative of pleasure; till, grown older and bolder, I learnt to wander for hours among the lonely and ancient forests of my father's estate,—with Spenser or Sydney in my pocket, and a thousand vague and bewildered imaginings in my mind. The distant mountains, the river rolling through its rocky channel, the mossy trunks of the gnarled oaks, the wild flower laying

Its fairy gem beside the giant tree,

the clouds, with their visions, the earth with its

varying seasons, united to form one glorious universe, intoxicating to my imagination. Alas! when in after years I visited the old Hall, and its woodland haunts, what grievous diminution had their splendours suffered in my eyes! I could no longer trace among their solitudes the visions of my boyhood; I could neither detect nor dream amid their scenery those wondrous features which had been mere incantations of my soul's creation!

"It is needless to relate that a soul of this ardent nature—a mind morbidly sensitive to external impulses—a heart tender even unto feebleness—necessarily conjoined to generate and foster poetical tendencies in one so wildly abandoned to his own mental guidance. I had long *felt* as a poet; and unconstrained, as I ought to have been, to devote my youthful faculties to other pursuits, my enthusiasm soon found vent in those wild shapings of the imagination which are sometimes the precursors of a nobler inspiration. I forget through what domestic treachery my folly was betrayed to my

family; but I well remember the indignant disgust of my father, and the irrepressible mirth of my brother, on a public perusal of my detected effusions. My father indeed would as soon have expected a son of his to become guilty of purloining the family plate as to betray so sneaking, so puny, 'so rascally,' a propensity, His guests naturally concurred in his paternal strictures; my brother hoped to laugh me out of my effeminate predilection; and one and all united to affix upon me the nickname of 'the poet,'—as one of the basest and most degrading that could be imagined for the descendant of an old rough-border tribe; of higher renown for their 'rude hand in the foray,' than for any premature pretensions to benefit of clergy.

"My father's only consolation on this mortifying family discovery was 'that the boy was to be a parson;' to qualify me for which pretension, I was immediately despatched to the tuition of a clergyman in an adjoining county; which was shared by some half dozen pupils of

the higher orders of society. My brother, meanwhile, was removed to Eton. Perhaps it had formed a more judicious balance of our several instincts, had the bold and unimpressible Hugh been consigned to the immediate inspection of so excellent a scholar, and so mild a tutor as Mr. Milbank; while my reserved disposition, and studious habits, would have been generalized and qualified by the buffeting of that miniature world,—a public school.

"Mr. Milbank, my new preceptor, was an amiable man, and a scholar of the highest order; but these were not the qualifications desirable in the correction of my failings; they taught him to consider me with peculiar indulgence, or rather with the fondest favour. He bestowed his most zealous care on the formation of a mind which he regarded as peculiarly fitted to do honour to his instructions; and in reproving my impure taste for Jonson and Shakspeare, and Spenser, he only replaced my dishonoured idols with Virgil and Homer. His mathematical instructions were abhorrently be-

stowed; and he detested argument like a woman;—classical literature, and its distinctions, formed the ruling ambition of his mind. At sixteen he dismissed me from his care as an accomplished miracle;—at sixteen, I re-entered my father's house as much 'the poet' as ever; but a poet with amended notions of his art. My father could no longer speak of me with patience; and I found myself contemplated in the neighbourhood as a sort of *natural*, or privileged ideot; *not* 'much too wise to walk into a well.'

"I was now placed at Oxford, where my brother was keeping his last term; a highly popular member of every club in the university. He retained all his frank and brotherly cordiality towards me; but I saw that he secretly regarded me as a sort of moral delinquent; and in some unguarded hour of festal levity, he betrayed to his companions my domestic cognomen! This was the master crisis of my destiny; I became 'the poet' for the remainder of my college days; and finding my first outbreak

of peevish resentment inefficient to repress the boyish merriment of the joyous crowd, I gradually resigned myself to the vocation assigned me. I became a recluse, a studious and meditative recluse, in order to escape the echoes of the vulgar sneer. I found consolation in my books—in *poetry*—for the contumely I had incurred for their sake; and I determined to seek no other. I went through the gradations necessary to my professional advancement with honour; my scholarship gained me the applause of many whose notice was in itself distinction; but my theological studies were a task reluctantly fulfilled. I became a controversialist, and of true Oxford orthodoxy; but I contented myself with the external show, and verbal frame of religion. Christianity was with me an argument, rather than an inward faith.

"At this period, the sudden death of my father hurried my return into Northumberland; and, on the opening of his will, it was discovered that his indignation against my degeneracy of mind and body, had expended itself in

limiting my patrimony to a moderate inheritance. I believe my brother felt more surprise and regret on this occasion than myself; he would have gladly doubled it by an immediate gift; but I repressed his generosity, by assuring him that I had not yet decided on rejecting the next presentation to the living which had been left by my father at my disposal; cordially accepting at the same time his invitation to make the hall my home in the interval.

"Another family event of considerable importance followed the decease of my father. My sister married; and under circumstances which, had he survived, would have moved his paternal ire in a degree only inferior to that excited by by my own delinquency. Sophia had bestowed her affections on a college friend of my brother's; a young man of estimable character and inestimable wealth;—but inherited from a father of low degree, who had raised himself to opulence by the success of a cotton manufactory on the banks of the Clyde. My sister had long repressed her own and her lover's partiality, in utter hopelessness

of obtaining my father's sanction to their union. But Hugh was a far more indulgent guardian of the family honour; retaining its hereditary prejudices only in so far as they were compatible with the happiness of others. In his general principle of 'live, and let live,' he did not

> Lose sight of conduct's only worth,
> The scattering smiles on this uneasy earth.

He had been better satisfied, indeed, that the bridegroom were one of the 'Forsters, Fenwicks, or Musgraves,' the *illustrissimi* of the debateable land; yet he bestowed Sophia's hand, and a liberal dowry upon his less noble friend, with the cordial grace of an upright and affectionate heart.

"On Sophia's anxious invitation, I had agreed to follow her to Scotland. The favourite brother of her infancy, she eagerly longed for my society and support, in the new country she had as yet but half adopted. Nor was I less satisfied to escape the convivial hospitality of the Hall. I began to feel myself an innovator;

foreign to the views and habits of the guests by which it was now crowded; while they, in return, regarded me with a measure of contempt tempered only by their respect and regard for my warm-hearted brother. But although he no longer sanctioned or tolerated jests upon 'the poet,' they failed not occasionally to reach my own ears; and I knew that the squire of the parish in which my future living was situated, had hinted his disgust at the prospect of having a 'tinkle-tankling ballad-monger,' for his parochial minister.

"Earnestly, though silently, did I pity my revilers; *not* that they were shut out from the enjoyments of elegant literature;—but that they had not learned to reverence the Creator through the created;—that they did not know, and could not imagine, those holy sympathies with the external face of nature, which not only lend their graceful inspiration to the measures of poetry, but serve to elevate the mind and purify the heart, and improve that intellectual superiority, which teaches us above all things the mild virtue of

indulgence towards the deficiencies and failings of our fellow-creatures.

"I followed my sister to Scotland; and was at once gratified by the elegance and domestic comfort by which I found her surrounded; and enchanted in a supreme degree by the exquisite beauty of scenery gracing the neighbourhood of her new home. I saw the imagery of my boyish dreams enlarged in mightiest expansion before my eyes!—The mountain, and the mountain-lake—the northern river with its hoarse cataracts—the withered heath and wild hill-side—were now around me in sublime reality; and I wandered amid their loneliness, and my soul drank in the spirit of their harmonies, till it became endued with a new sense of existence;—and brightened by a light of glorious revelation,

> Flashing upon that inward eye
> Which is the bliss of solitude!

"But this exaltation of mental excitement could not long endure. I gazed and gazed upon the mightiness of nature, till my heart

sickened with the consciousness of its own insignificance—of its own isolation. I longed for a companion to whom I could communicate its dawning perceptions;—from whom I could derive support in its hour of self-abasement. My sister and her bridegroom were still engrossed in that early joy of mutual affection and plighted faith, which is impatient of interruption, and indifferent to ordinary pleasures; and excepting the family of a neighbouring Laird, consisting of five goodly sons, gigantic as the race of Anak and barbarous as their native Moors, there was not a single person in the adjoining country with whom I could seek refuge from my own overwhelming thoughts.

"But a very few weeks after my arrival in the Highlands, the family of the Sinclairs received an unlooked for addition in an orphan cousin, who had been recently bequeathed to their guardianship by her last surviving parent. Her education at Edinburgh was now completed, and she came to take her place among the fierce Anguses, and Ronalds, her rawboned kinsmen,

who looked with contempt upon her slight figure and delicate beauty. Lilias was indeed beautiful—exquisitely beautiful ;—mild, and gentle, and fair, and feminine ! But had she been less lovely—less touchingly gifted with the sweetest excellencies of womanhood—still, situated as we were, methinks I must have loved her. We were severally alone in the world—each estranged by circumstances from the remaining few on whom we had claims of kindred. My own brother and sister pitied me for my romantic spirit; and the family of Lilias despised her for her scanty inheritance. Soon, very soon, did we learn to consider ourselves independent of them all; soon, very soon, did our own mutual affection suffice to render us careless of their indifference.

"We had no motive to conceal the growth of this rash but fervent passion. The old Laird and his frugal wife regarded my moderate fortune and professional prospects as a liberal provision for their kinswoman ; whose fair face and slender dowry, had inspired them with

some degree of parental alarm, touching the susceptibility of their own half-savage progeny. They were eager, therefore, to sanction an engagement between us; stipulating only that our union should be deferred till I could take orders, when Lilias Sinclair would have attained her eighteenth year;—at present they regarded her as a child. And *as* a child, and in the simplicity of their unworldly hearts, did they resign her to my care and constant society. As betrothed lovers, we were permitted to wander away our summer days among the green straths, and rocky wilds, and left 'to our own hearts' most sweet society,' it would have been difficult to imagine a more delicious interchange of remembered and present impressions of thought and feeling, or of hallowed anticipations of a life of wedded happiness. Oh! those blessed days of early love, and hope, and innocence!—why did I not tender them more dearly! why did I permit them to pass away like the unnoticed waves of a rolling river!

"Lilias, fortunately for my predilections, was gifted with an ardent imagination, and a keen

perception of the beautiful; she was already within the limits of her own language, an elegant scholar; and it was now my gratifying task to guide her enchanted soul through the flowery literature of other countries. I taught her to love the poetry I loved; to delight in the writings by which I had been myself delighted; and when I heard the measures of Filicaja melting on her lips, or beheld her eye sparkle in reciting the severe sublimities of Alfieri, I fancied—I *believed*—that a kindred spirit animated our bosoms; and that a twin pulse of mental sympathy divided us from the rest of the creation! Fond fool!—rash, confiding fool!—my egotism could not discern that Lilias was inspired by the potent engrossment of a first attachment; that her boundless love towards myself, extended itself to my favourite pursuits; that had I been a mechanist—a grammarian—a hunter of antiquities—an exhumator of mummies—my Lilias would have persuaded herself into a similar taste!

"But there were other than literary topics, which warmly interested our mutual feelings. Miss Sinclair was even less satisfied than myself with the tone and character of my religious persuasion. Hers was a pure, but fervid faith —worshipping 'not Paul, but Jesus!'—She knew nothing of conflicting sects; she knew but the written word in its simplest interpretation. She accused me of founding *my* creed on the cavilling of schools; and of seeking *my* devotion among the inanimate toys of the creation; and such a measure of faith might have sufficed to a layman. But she bade me remember that it would soon become my appointed task to expound in the ears of others, those revealed truths which as yet had spoken but in whispers to my heart. She reminded me that my mission was to the illiterate—unto whom my dry learning would be unavailing; to the poor and the sick—who behold in the earth's extended bosom, nought save the source of their daily bread; and with the persuasive eloquence

of Goëthe's Margaret, she prayed me to seek with diligence the source of a more heavenly faith!

"Soothed by the tenderness of her anxious voice, I promised all she required;—and be it remembered that in these affectionate communings

> We were alone; but not alone, as they,
> Who, shut in chambers, call it loneliness.

Oh no!—*we* were alone in the stillness of the evening coppice, on the waters of the silent lake;—or freshened by the spray of some embowered waterfall, or listening through the twilight to the shrill cry of the distant plover! And in scenes like these the accents of Lilias reached me with a more plaintive sweetness; and my own vows of faith and truth assumed a more hallowed tone of fervency!—

"I would that I could describe her as she appeared in those unsullied days of confidence; for her daughter, lovely as she is, does not recall that frail and delicate character of beauty, which was so peculiarly her own.—Florence has something of the aristocratic sternness of her father's

—her *hated* father's brow; for alas! in spite of our plighted faith, of our impassioned tenderness, I was not destined to the joy of receiving the hand of my Lilias—I was not permitted to call her child my own!

CHAPTER XI.

But what a twilight spreads around me now!
The splendour of the sun—the joyous sense
Of lofty day—the thousand-coloured world's
Ray-rich variety—are mantled round
Within the misty cloud that shrouds my soul.
Each day was formerly a life to me!
Sorrow was mute—foreboding's self was dumb;
And in an oarless bark, the stream of Hope
Wafted me lightly on its buoyant waves;—
But now the horrors of futurity
Appal my heart with darkness.

Translation of Goethe's Tasso. *D. V.*

"It was determined between Miss Sinclair, and myself—or perhaps I should rather say, that in consequence of the scruples of the Sinclair family, I had *myself* determined, on passing the period which must necessarily elapse previous to my ordination in prosecuting my theological

studies at one of the Northern Universities of Germany:—those innermost sanctuaries of the purity of the reformed faith. I persuaded myself, at the time, that this peculiar distinction formed their attraction in my sight; and that my sole motive for avoiding Oxford, and the seclusion of my Northumbrian home,—either of which might have afforded a retirement equally favourable to my pursuits,—was the desire of escaping the prejudice of vulgar opinion, which had there resolved itself into ridicule of my peculiar turn of mind. With the dread so natural to my age of finding my poetical vein the object of a fool-born jest, I entertained a horror of the scornful appellation which had been attached to my boyhood, equal in degree to the terrors of some hunted dog, on finding that a pursuing mob is shouting him into madness.

"But a subsequent analysis of my feelings has assured me that my attraction towards Germany arose, in part, from the vagrant tendencies of my mind; and still more from its innate predilection for metaphysical enquiry. I was, at that period,

a boy-philosopher, deeply read in the mysticism of the German school; and I longed to rush into the arena, and wrestle hand to hand with the apostles of a creed by which I was alternately interested, and perplexed, and disgusted.

"Lilias, however unsuspicious of the fact, was not the more satisfied with the plan of my continental wanderings. The sea, the mighty ocean, formed to her apprehensive feelings an awful medium of separation; she could not bear that even our epistolary communications should become the sport of wind and tide,—Prognosticating all possible varieties of evil from my sojourn in a foreign country, again and again, with tears and lamenting, she implored me to return to the Hall, or to resume my studies in my own appointed College. I resisted her appeal with those arguments of seeming plausibility, with which the selfishness of obstinacy can at all times arm its purpose; yet I own that in tearing myself from the arms of the weeping Lilias, my heart was oppressed by a forecast of calamity. Twice did I return for the added sorrow of a

fresh adieu; and when I bequeathed the happiness and well-being of my beloved to the indulgent care of my sister, by whom she was tenderly cherished, it was with the earnest solemnity of a final farewell. Alas! how frequently are the presentiments of parting hours 'such as wring the life from out young hearts,' how frequently are they justified by the casualties consequent on absence. Death, disease, the accustomed changes of time, the influence of the world, the fickleness of our frail nature, all conspire to augment the dangers of separation!

"It was at Göttingen, where I established myself for the following winter, that I first became acquainted with Lord Willersdale; to whose friendship my destiny has been indebted for some of its most important alleviations. Among my new companions, the fortunes which had been considered as allied to beggary in England, raised me to considerable importance; enabling me to increase the stock of their frugal pleasures, while I insured to myself a social knot of disputants and enthusiasts, fulfilling all my

ideas of enlightened society. Among these, and among my German associates in general, I found that the mental peculiarities which had drawn upon me the contempt of my matter-of-fact kindred and fellow-countrymen, were regarded as glorious and supreme distinctions. The most erudite scholarship weighed lightly in their estimation against the extravagance of poetical enthusiasm; and while I thus learned to cherish anew my intellectual errors, the avowed purpose of my residence at Göttingen appeared forgotten.

"It was my growing intimacy with Willersdale which served to check my foible. Without wounding my self-love by the vexatious arrows of ridicule, without affecting to despise or misinterpret the tone of my mental exaltation, or to assume a tone of remonstrance that might have irritated my pride, he contrived that my chosen associates should exaggerate their own exaggeration in my presence, till its absurdity became revolting even to myself. He led me by his example, to studies of a more reasonable

character; he presented me, as his friend, in society at once literary—profoundly literary—and rational. He made me vain of my own classical acquirements by showing me their value in the eyes of others; nor could I become his companion, without seeking to emulate the solid and universal philosophy of his modes of thought and action.

"Meanwhile my letters from Scotland were of the most satisfactory and endearing description. My Lilias had become all but an inmate in my sister's home. 'It was their pleasure,' she said, 'their only pleasure, to talk and think of the absent one.' Her expressions of tenderness were graced by the untaught sweetness and pathos of a wild bird's notes; while her graver admonitions assumed that spotless beauty of holiness, which graces a female mind uncorrupted by the levities of the world. As the winter advanced, she acquainted me that she had consented to accompany my brother-in-law's family to Edinburgh; a measure which I warmly commended in reply, from my know-

ledge of her uneasy position in her uncle's family, among a race of boisterous and uncultivated young Highlanders.

"But when she wrote again, I discovered less reason to be satisfied with the measure. My brother and sister were young, and lively to excess; and severally qualified, by fortune and birth, to occupy a distinguished place in the society of the Scottish metropolis. Its season of gaiety was now at the full; and the letters of Lilias were filled with descriptions of balls, and dinner-parties; of visits to the theatre, and morning excursions, in which she found herself compelled to take a part; her letters began to speak more of herself, and less of me, or of the past. At first I was far from being disturbed by these recitals; I was pleased by the vivacity of her talent for description; and even when my sister, in her correspondence, alluded to the universal admiration excited by Lilias, by her unpretending beauty and accomplishments, I was rather flattered than alarmed. I felt her to be so much my own—to be so purely single-

minded—so superior to the ordinary arts of feminine coquetry, that I even enjoyed the idea of her triumph. In truth, I was myself wholly inexperienced in the corruptions of fashionable society; nor did I know how many delicate and indelicate gradations fill up the extremes between truth and falsehood! I still, meanwhile, continued to address her in the fond and fervent tone of exalted passion which had originally prevailed between us; and it were 'matter for a demon's smile,' to contemplate in *her* letters those gradual inroads which the dissipation of the world was slowly making upon her simplicity—upon her love of nature—her devotion to its God; and in *mine* the still confiding rapture of an enthusiastic lover!

"Her's indeed, became of less frequent occurrence; but then I knew her to be vexatiously engrossed by the splendid hospitality of my sister's mansion; and when the spring advanced, my own were almost equally retarded; for I had accompanied Lord Willersdale on a tour through the north of Germany. Alas! as we

stood together on the heights of "sovran Brocken," or amid the *Felsensee* of the *Riesengebürge*, my heart in its ecstacy of admiration, turned towards the green glens of Strathnevin, soothed by the remembrance of a yet dearer association! My noble companion expressed himself anxious that I should extend my tour in his company towards Italy and Greece; and had not a stronger attraction retained me in the north, no project could have been more gratifying. But I qualified my refusal with a frank confession of my personal engagements and professional views.

"'My age scarcely yet authorizes me to become a monitor,' he replied; 'yet our friendship seems to sanction the liberty I take in observing that the qualifications of an English Protestant pastor might be better understood and acquired, on the spot where the duties of his ministry manifest themselves through the experience of others. Surely, my dear E., a residence in some clergyman's family of your own country, would better enable you to pursue

your studies, and observe their practical application.'

"I could not but acknowledge the truth of his remark. Besides, my metaphysical mania was already abated, and I had fulfilled one great purpose of my residence at Göttingen, in a tolerable acquirement of the German language. But above all, his arguments were re-enforced by the suggestions of my own secret heart. I longed to be at home again. I longed to be again by the side of Lilias, were it but for a day! I longed to hear her murmur anew the acknowledgement of her love,—that most eloquent period to a youthful ear! My resolution was speedily taken; and when Lord Willersdale departed for Vienna, I pursued my way towards Hamburg; and landed in England without any preparatory announcement to my family and friends.

"My brother, (in the engrossment of my personal relation, I have forgotten to speak of him) my brother was already married to a woman of rank and fortune; who, from my observa-

tions during a visit of a single day to the Hall, had already assumed the absolute dominion of his home and him. Both were undergoing a severe reform; and learning to wear the aristocratic elegance befitting their new ruler;—both looked cheerless and disorganized; and flying from their desolate aspect, I crossed the border, and found myself once more in the happy country of my hopes.

"And oh! what an hour is that when, after a prolonged residence in a foreign country, we re-approach the spot inhabited by all who are dearest to us in the world!—when the excited heart aches with its own palpitation—when the business of daily life which we encounter by the way, appears so vain, so profitless, so utterly importunate;—when every ordinary obstacle seems devised by the malice of an enemy!—Yet on my arrival in Scotland, nothing was vexatious, nothing importunate: I felt so sure of those I loved,—so content with myself! I fancied myself to have stolen a march upon time—to have defrauded absence of half its due—

and I knew that every measure of the road drew me still nearer towards perfect happiness. The voices I heard reminded me by their accent of that of Lilias;—their language was hers;—the green vales were those of her country;—and when I reached the Highlands, I greeted the distant outlines of their rude mountains in the sky, even as the beloved face of an old familiar friend!

"It chanced to be the anniversary of my first arrival at Strathnevin. The same delicate foliage of early summer was on the trees; the same wild flowers were scattered among the thickets. The sunshine blazed out scorchingly on the same jutting crags; and the same calm shadows lay lengthening at intervals over the valley. The cattle luxuriating midway in the glassy coolness of the brook; the flocks retreating in groups into the shadowy nooks of their tufted pastures; the solitary kite wheeling through the cloudless void of the clear blue sky; the herdsman's distant whistle mingling with the nearer carol of the woodlands;—it was

all the same soft summer-landscape;—it was all a Heavenly reflection of my first impressions on that very spot!.

"I reached the mansion house:—its inmates were absent on an excursion of pleasure among the neighbouring lakes; but they were to return on the morrow. I was disappointed;—the current of my eagerness seemed painfully and unnecessarily checked. I looked round the various chambers for some token of their recent habitation by those I loved,—again I was disappointed!—The books which I encountered were such as I should have regretted to find in their hands; and even the traces I discovered of female industry, were of that frivolous and ornamental kind, which bespeaks a degraded taste.—I was disappointed!

"On the morrow they returned; but not in the group limited by domestic affection, which I had so rapturously anticipated. Strangers were among them; women of rank, men of fashion;—wild with mirth, and levity, and insolence. My brother and sister received me

with the fondest welcome; but still I could discover that they regarded my sudden arrival as a *contre-temps;* they would willingly have deferred it till the departure of the Duchess, and Lady Gertrude, and the rest of their noble associates.

"And Lilias?—Alas! even Lilias appeared embarrassed by my coming. 'Would that we had been alone,—unrestricted by the impertinent notice of all these tiresome people!' she said, as she extricated herself from my embrace. 'Why not write to forewarn us; that we might have managed it otherwise—or that I might have returned to Sinclair House, to receive you.'

"'And cannot you, dearest Lilias, even now escape homewards in a day or two?—Your uncle and cousins would be far less importunate witnesses than this crowd of strangers.'

"'Impossible!—think of the ridicule to which we should expose ourselves! Sophia's set of giddy friends would seek no better diversion than coming to laugh at our forced retreat.'

" This was the first time I had heard her express a feeling of deference towards the opinions of the vain and the frivolous; and her words grated strangely on my ear. But I looked upon her loveliness and forgave her! During my year of absence Lilias had expanded from the fair and timid girl, into the full blown and glorious luxuriance of womanhood. She had acquired an air of decided fashion, and a style of elegance in her attire, which in some degree, marred her graceful simplicity; and although I *admired* her more than ever, I felt that I had *loved* her better in her earlier guise. My sister's guests addressed me with the courtesy due to my position in the family, and in the world; but they were a light-headed, light-hearted, pleasure-loving crew; who, as they could not be permitted to make me and my grave profession their butt, and seemed aware that they could fit me to no better purpose, soon decided that I might as well have remained at Göttingen.

" No person can reside long in an obscure

country, without acquiring something of the uncouth or grotesque in his dress, and appearance, and phraseology. The northern Germans have a peculiar air of formal or sentimental artlessness, which I conclude I had unconsciously contracted; for on the day following my arrival, I overheard a young English officer of rank who appeared domesticated at Strathnevin, whisper to the Duchess, that I had exactly the *tournure* of a frontispiece to Kotzebue's play of "Misanthropy and Repentance;" and my sister and Lilias soon began to oppress me with entreaties to cut my hair and tie my cravat like *other people*. My sister I could have readily forgiven; but Lilias!—I had vainly hoped that the opinions of 'other people' were as indifferent to her as to myself;—nevertheless I was eager to comply; and I trusted that the sneers of the fashionable group were at an end!

"At the period of my return to England, a new era had commenced in its national literature. The reptile-battery of flippant periodi-

cal criticism had opened its attacks on all that was superior or rebellious to the routine of established custom; and a few unsupported poets, who had presumed to arrogate to themselves the right of looking at nature with their own eyes, and of embodying their perceptions in their own simple phrase, were united for the pillory of popular reprobation under the ironical clanship of the '*Lake School*.' That there may exist schools of philosophy, or of science, is self-evident; but a school of poetry is an anomalous contradiction. The eagle soars alone, and on no given track, towards the brightness of day; and the poet,—the *inspired* poet,—cannot restrict the overflowing of his soul within the conventional trammels of common-place banality.

In my earnest self-conviction on this subject, I presumed one evening to take up the defence of a class of writers whose works were at present almost unknown to me, against the virulent attacks of the young Englishmen; which were re-inforced by a thousand poignant witticisms

and specious arguments, borrowed from some of the brilliant periodicals of the day. The whole assemblage formed itself into audience of our dispute; and my antagonist had the art of rendering my earnest fervour ridiculous, by the assumed humility with which he affected to concede his opinion to my better judgment.

"'I feel the full extent of impertinence which my inexperienced criticism must assume in your eyes,' said he, in termination of the affair, 'when I remember that you have yourself avowedly joined the standard of this holy army of martyrs,—the Simplicitarians.' And on this, with well-dissembled enthusiasm, he affected to recite some lines which he had found in an old note-book of Sophia's—one of the vapid effusions of my boyhood. The little circle could scarcely repress its contagious risibility; and I was forced to leave the room to moderate my own impulses of indignation. From the first moment I had disliked this man—whom I had found in familiar attendance upon Lilias—'close at the ear of Eve.' He was eminently

handsome; and although nearly two years my junior, yet the experience of six years in a fashionable regiment had enlarged his knowledge of the world, and gifted him with all the personal address in which I was myself deficient; his tone of conversation, too, was brilliant and imposing; for living among the most distinguished wits of the day, his comments became the natural reflection of their originality.

"On the following day, in the course of a solitary walk, which for the first time since my arrival had been sought by Lilias, I ventured to express my opinions of Captain S——. I even acknowledged my growing antipathy towards him; but I could not obtain her concurrence in my sentiments; and the frankness with which she engaged in his defence rather served to disarm my dawning suspicions.

"'Your judgment,' she said 'is illiberal and groundless. Captain S—— has not been brought up in the school that has formed our ownconceptions;—highly-born, and highly-bred, the aristocratic prejudices which are disgusting

when assumed, form an inseparable part of his nature. Yet he is unpretending and lively,—willing to adapt his opinions to the passing caprice of the hour, and of the circle in which he moves; and above all, *he is master of his own temper.*'

"I sought to evade this covert reproof, by trying to resume the argument of the preceding evening; and as we were once more alone, and once more surrounded by those exquisite beauties of scenery which had so often inspired our mutual enthusiasm, I assumed,—almost unconsciously,—my former tone of exaltation,—my former acknowledgments of profound emotion and sympathy in their loveliness.

"'What would I give,'—said Lilias, blushing as she spoke,—'what would I *not* give, dearest Charles, that I could persuade you to moderate this vehemence of thought and feeling. Consider for a moment the ridicule to which it would expose you in society:—consider the sarcasms which your poetical mania will provoke in the world!—No one has the least degree of forbearance towards those who pretend

to finer feeling, or higher aspirations than themselves;—and after all, the prose of ordinary life has so much the preponderance, that the romance of a visionary mind can scarcely escape the charge of extravagance!—Above all things let me implore you to abstain from your extacies in Captain S——'s presence; he knows so well how to turn the weaknesses of others to his own advantage, that every word you uttered last night filled me with regret.'

"And was this all?—could one short year have changed her thus?—could one short year have blunted every natural impulse of her bosom?—

"'Lilias!' I replied, 'dearest Lilias! I would not willingly leave one wish of yours ungratified,—I would not willingly thwart even your idlest caprice. But you must give me time, love, to achieve this mental revolution. I am not prepared to meet this rapid alteration in your own character. I will attempt the task, since it is your will;—but be indulgent with

my failings, as I am patient with your own infirmity of purpose.'

"I think she was touched by my submission; for the remainder of our walk was happy and confiding, as those of the days of 'lang syne.' But there was yet an arrow in store for me, in the envenomed quiver of mine enemy.

"At the period to which I allude, the notions entertained in England of the resources and character of German literature, were as narrow as they were erroneous. A few detestable translations of some of Kotzebue's trifling dramatic pieces; a few flowery Idylls essentially incompatible with our national language and predilections; and, above all, Werter, the sublimities of which require all the guileless good faith of a German heart in the perusal, to screen its deforming absurdities from contempt—Werter was continually held forth as the Alpha and Omega of the elegant literature of Germany! excepting, indeed, when Schiller's boyish production of 'the Robbers' was cited as a still more flagrant instance of its demoralization!

A short time after our critical dispute on the merits of the lake-school, I entered the room one rainy morning, just as Captain S. was amusing the ladies of the party, by reading aloud some of the parodies of the Anti-Jacobin, which had recently appeared. The admirable humour of the verses was considerably augmented by the mock heroic air assumed by the lector; and not one among the circle joined in the general laugh more heartily than myself. I was surprised to perceive that Lilias regarded me with a look of approbation, as if to reward my applause as a victory gained over my own prejudices; and it would appear that her fashionable friend considered my supposed submission in a similar light; for he immediately applied the probe to my morbid sensibility in another manner.

"'Mr. E.' observed Captain S——, 'is so indulgent towards the ridicule immortally shed by Canning upon the 'U—niversity of Göttingen,' that perhaps he will allow us to wonder how men of ability and judgment, such as

my friend Lord Willersdale and himself, can have allowed themselves to devote so much of their valuable time to the acquisition of a language so odious in the ears of men, and so poorly gifted in a literary point of view to repay their bootless labour. The pleasure of reading the rhodomontades of Werter in the original, like the Spanish perusal of Don Quixote, must have formed a miserable compensation for the broken jaws and excoriated ears, necessitated in the classical pronunciation of the "*Sprechen sie Deutsch.*"'

"'You must pardon me for assuring you,' said I, 'that the purest accentuation of the German language is far more softly modulated than either French or English.'

"Captain S—— bowed with a supercilious smile.

"'And that its literary resources form a treasury of wealth to the scholar, such as he would scarcely resign for the flimsy elegances of a more polished idiom. In jurisprudence, in divinity, in natural philosophy, in numerous

branches of science, the Germans have an unfathomed mine of written wisdom; while the poetical works of Göthe, Schiller, Lessing, Voss, Bürger, ——'

"Captain S—— interrupted me by an affectedly laborious recapitulation of their names, imploring me to spare my lips and his own ears the pain of any further enumeration; as the value of these and *such* authors, was already well appreciated in England. I own I was irritated by his contemptuous air. During my residence in Germany I had been admitted to the familiar intercourse of several of these illustrious men; and my devout personal worship of their intellectual pre-eminence, seemed to render his sacrilegious sneers an insult to myself.

"'For instance,' resumed my tormentor, taking a volume from the table; 'we have here one among the number, who may speak for himself.' And opening the book, which was a translation of Schiller's Wallenstein, either by Scott or Coleridge, he began to recite one of its least interesting scenes, with all the mock

emphasis and misplaced pathos, that suffices to depreciate even the best of poetry. At length he paused; and found himself rewarded by a burst of laughter from the circle, amid which the voice of Lilias was distinctly audible.

"'It is now my turn,' said I, resolutely taking the volume from his hands. 'This being my own property, I resume it in order to lift up my voice in its defence.' Then turning to that celebrated scene in which the falling Duke of Friedland strives to re-animate the personal affections of the younger Piccolomini towards his daughter and himself, I proceeded to read it aloud, with the simplicity due to its exquisitely touching character. That sympathy 'of nature which makes the whole world kin,' insured to my attempt all the success I had anticipated. During the general murmur of approbation which followed the concluding verses, my antagonist had left the room. But it was not his absence that disappointed me of the guerdon I had sought; it was that the flushed cheek of Lilias remained unmoved by the noble

and hallowed sentiments that had fallen on her ear; it was, that among all the rest, the lips of my beloved had alone withheld their homage from the poet's inspiration.

"'Lilias!' said I, drawing her towards a window, as soon as some new source of amusement had dispersed the little party; 'Lilias! you are displeased—alienated—unkind; how have I offended you?'

"'In many things! you persist, in spite of my entreaties, in displaying those over-wrought sensibilities, which render yourself ridiculous, and keep me in a perpetual tremor of apprehension. Above all, you omit no occasion of provoking and braving a man already sufficiently your enemy.'

"'You are most unjust! you cannot but perceive that in every instance your new friend has been the aggressor; you cannot but feel that his enmity towards a stranger must proceed from a partiality—from pretensions that ought to be equally offensive to you and to myself.'

"'It is scarcely half an hour,' said Lilias,

evading the question, 'since you rudely snatched a book from his hands, with which he was in the act of amusing your sister's friends.'

"I started at this accusation; it had not occurred to me that my involuntary action would be thus interpreted; and hastily escaping from the drawing-room, I made it my business to seek out the object of my imputed insult. I found him walking alone, and with hasty strides in the shrubbery.

"'Captain S——,' I exclaimed, frankly accosting him, "I am assured that my vehemence in defence of a favourite writer, has given me the unintentional air of being deficient in courtesy towards a gentleman—a guest of my sister's. Accept my hand; and believe that no ungracious intention was entertained on my part in this unimportant affair.'

"'It is not for me to decide on the laws of politeness in practice among the *Burschenschaft* of Germany,' he replied, coldly granting the hand I sought; and more than renewing my former irritation by his callous insolence.

" 'Nay!' I exclaimed, 'if you are resolved on regarding my conduct in an offensive light—be it so—and let me gratefully acknowledge your frankness. I thank Heaven that no profession yet debars me from my birthright privilege of guarding my own honour, as a man and a gentleman.'

" 'Sir!'—he began in an angry voice; but gentle footsteps now approached to interrupt his violence. Lilias, suspicious of the misunderstanding which might arise between us, had followed me to the shrubbery.

" 'Can this be?' she murmured, trembling with emotion. '*You*, Charles! can you be so careless of my happiness, so indifferent to my persuasions, as to seek a quarrel of this idle nature? Oh! what are my prospects of happiness! since I find your temper thus ungovernable, your heart thus obdurate.'

" 'Miss Sinclair may calm her flattering apprehensions,' said the Englishman. 'I have received Mr. E's assurances that I may attribute his recent incivility to any cause rather than

one of intentional offence. I have already accepted the concession; nor am I sufficiently Quixotic to seek a personal dispute, where I have no reason to expect a personal enmity.'

"He left us together as he spoke; but not to the enjoyment of a better understanding. Lilias still reproved my sensitive fervour, while I renewed my accusal of her undue interest in its object.

"'Captain S—— has good temper and good-breeding to recommend him.'

"'And you would imply that your betrothed husband is deficient in both. Lilias! take back your plighted word!—it shall no longer authorize you to practise this hourly aggravation of my faults—this cold derision of my failings. Farewell, Lilias! I shall leave Strathnevin; and perhaps, when this glittering flight of summer insects shall have vanished with the sunshine, when these new, these *well-bred* English friends shall have lost the gloss of novelty in your eyes, perhaps you will at length learn to regret the more cordial lover of your early days.'

"My sister, who saw in my hasty adieus only

the transient pique of a jealous lover, laughed at my vehemence, and suffered me to mount my horse, and depart, in the secret certainty of my speedy return; and avoiding all further encounter with the Duchess and her party, I left Strathnevin—for ever.

"Scarcely had I arrived in Northumberland, where I found that the illustrious *coterie* in which I had been recently domesticated, rendered me a welcome guest to Lady Agnes, my brother's haughty wife, when I received a packet of letters from Scotland; some from Lilias, some from my sister; announcing the departure of the guests whose society had banished me, and earnestly imploring my return. But in the vehemence of my indignation I suffered them to remain unanswered. I was occupied in renewing the impressions, and in re-exciting the solitary enthusiasm of my youth; nor could I yet learn to forgive either Lilias or Sophia the sacrifice of every nobler feeling, and every mental gift, which they had so precipitately made on the icy shrine of the world's vain idols.

"Again my sister wrote, and again implored me to visit her. But no longer at Strathnevin; she had settled herself in her house at Edinburgh for the period of her confinement, and was anxious that at such a moment even the exterior appearance of estrangement and unkindness should cease to divide us. Lilias was still her companion, and eagerly seconded her entreaties.

"I was preparing to comply; eager to seize on this excuse for making my peace with my beloved, and for seeking Sophia's pardon for my petulance. But during the short interval of ceremony due to my tenacious hostess, I received another letter from Scotland—written in a strange hand—sealed with a mourning seal—though bearing my brother's cognizance. It came to tell me that Miss Sinclair had disappeared mysteriously and untraceably from Edinburgh—that my sister had given birth to a dead son, and was already a shrouded corse!—She had died bequeathing me her blessing.—

CHAPTER XII.

If e'er in thought or word
  Or deed, I gave thy bosom pain,
Forgive me!—were my life restored,
  I would not grieve thee, love, again
Thou wilt forgive!—thou hast forgiven
  But I've a prayer to make thee yet,
If thou hast hope in yon high Heaven
  To meet me—promise to forget!—
Forget me!—'tis a bitter prayer
  In this last parting hour, to one
Who, through guilt, grief, disease, despair,
  Hath loved me well as thou hast done.

The Graves of the North.

"It was a dreadful effort—that return into Scotland!—it was a trying moment in which I saw the head of my only sister lowered into the grave!——it was a cruel hour when I heard the voice of the Sinclairs, upbraiding the un-

happy Lilias as a cast-away, and swearing vengeance on her seducer!

"Vengeance!—but on whom?—My own broken heart and furrowed brow avouched that I, at least, had no share in the crime; and the Englishman—the officer—*the accursed*—had remained in Edinburgh during the whole period of our family distresses; exhibiting the deepest sympathy in our grief—the most anxious interest in the subject of our inquietudes. Who—who could have been the companion of her flight?—who the accomplice of her cruel injury against the friends who loved her?

"She had disappeared one morning at day-dawn from my brother's dwelling;" before mid-day she had presented herself at the office of the agent, in whose hands her slender inheritance was deposited; claiming her birthright, and tendering a legal acquittal of his charge. The man of business, who had remitted her fortune to her hands, described her as pale, and strangely altered in her appearance; but tearless and resolute; and in reply to his observations on

the unannounced peremptoriness of her demand, she had represented its necessity as arising from some family emergency. From that period, and that spot, no further trace of her movements could be detected!

"Nothing now remained to detain me in Scotland.—Strathnevin! how desolate—how agonizing did its utter bereavement appear in my eyes! My poor sacrificed Sophia!—my miserable guilty Lilias—wherefore had they deserted me?—Why, why was I left behind to wander like a solitary spectre over the earth?—Fortunately for the preservation of my mental faculties, the sufferings of my heart were permitted to work their ravages on my mortal frame. On my return homeward towards England, I was seized with a fever, which soon threatened to terminate my afflictions. My brother was summoned to the miserable inn in which my illness had overtaken me; and with all his former kindliness, and with the deepest compassion, he watched by my delirious pillow during my hour of danger. I verily believe that his affectionate

cares alone recalled me to life; but the medical men, whose assistance he had procured from Edinburgh, pronounced that even that renovated existence was, and must for some time remain precarious; assuring us that perfect tranquillity and sea air were indispensably necessary to my final restoration.

"In a small fishing town upon the verge of my brother's estates, he retained the use of an old mansion, a better kind of farm-house; to which, in our youth, we had occasionally resorted for summer bathing. I persuaded him to permit me to instal myself for a time in this secluded retreat; claiming the services of old Mildred to become once more my nurse, with a younger household to assist her labours. Lady Agnes, who was secretly apprehensive of the restraint my lingering convalescence would prove at the Hall, warmly seconded my proposal. This, as I had anticipated, was decisive. My brother accompanied me to Dudley, to preside over my comfortable installation in my new home; and was satisfied with my promise to abstain from

the fruitless contemplation of my recent afflictions; and to devote my leisure, with fitting moderation, to the duties of the profession in which I was about to engage myself. The resident pastor of the village was a friend of our early years, an estimable and enlightened man; and to his paternal vigilance, my brother affectionately consigned the care of my health and happiness. My health—my happiness—where were they?—buried in the grave of my innocent sister!—vanished with the sinful fugitive whom I could not teach myself to forget!

"Let me turn, while I can, to less painful considerations! Let me turn to the homely comforts of my calm fireside—to Mildred's motherly ministry to my still feeble health—to my sloping garden, bright with spring flowers, and overlooking

The clear hyaline—the glassy sea!

—to my books with their soothing interest—to my reliance on the promises of Heaven—to my wakening sympathy with that consoling word—whose power is of no account, save that which is

given it from above! I grew happier in the remembrance of the brevity of human life; I learnt to consider my transient hour of human trial as a speck in the mightiness of eternity; and I forgot to weep for those to whom I might so soon, so *very* soon, be conjoined in the grave! The summer came with its joyous impulses of health—shining on the withered branch which it could not re-animate; for although my sickly frame gradually recovered its strength, the flush of youth, and its smile, and the sanguine eagerness of its glance, had vanished for ever from my withered aspect. My brother frequently visited me; and was satisfied, and even grateful, for the efforts I had made against my own feelings, in compliance with his entreaties.

"I am approaching,—Heaven be thanked! the close of my narration;—I am approaching the period which assigned my precious Florence to my charge;—at once alleviating and augmenting the bitter sum of my past afflictions.

"It was on a winter evening, the year following my first settlement at Dudley—a bitter,

stormy, winter evening; when, having gazed from my window till sunset upon the expanse of the chafing ocean, the flickering clouds that swept like troubled streamers athwart the sky, and the ominous restlessness of the shrieking sea-birds,—I ordered my shutters and curtains to be closed; and having piled the logs upon my hearth into a more cheering blaze, I sat myself down beside it; lost in the consideration of how many humble dwellings might, at that moment, be distracted with apprehensions for the safety of such absent inmates as had gone down to the sea in ships. The gradual rising of the storm, as it howled around my exposed mansion, more than justified the depression of my heart. In the hurried clamour of its utmost violence, I was startled by a loud ring at my gate; and as my brother had recently quitted me, and I had never yet been visited by any casual guest, I could not but attribute this unwonted call on my hospitality to some benighted traveller, seeking refuge from the in-

clemency of the night. Eagerly calling to Mildred to be on the alert, I bade my servant hasten to admit whoever might claim shelter under my roof-tree in such an hour.

"He returned with a perplexed look into my apartment. 'Sir, the driver says the lady is so feeble she cannot alight.'

"'What driver—what lady?'—I rushed towards the entry; and could discern through the obscurity that a carriage of some description was standing beside the porch; and that the post-boy was already assisting a muffled and tottering female into the hall. Involuntarily I rushed forward, and supported her in my arms towards my sitting-room.—With spontaneous consciousness, I felt that it was *no* benighted traveller—*no* stranger!—There was but one breathing woman whose presence could at once overwhelm me with the emotion that now thrilled through my bosom.

"'Lilias!' I faltered as I deposited her on the sofa. She could not reply; but I felt her

shudder and shrink from my touch, as she carefully placed beside her the burthen she had hitherto held closely folded within her cloak.

"I saw that it was a sleeping child!—'Lilias!' I murmured, struggling with my sobs—'one word—only one! this child—is it yours—is it the offspring of guilt?'

"'Of guilt—but not of *my* guilt!' replied a ghastly voice, which I could faintly recognize as hers. 'Do not cast it from you—Charles, a dying woman is come to bequeath it to your mercy. My child is legitimate; yet I have never ceased to love you—nor ever sanctified my vows to any other man!'

"'Compose yourself;' said I, perceiving that her strength was exhausted, and her voice broken by disease. 'Take time for this grievous explanation.'

"'*Time!*' she repeated with a mournful accent—'alas! who shall measure the moments of mine? Hear me, dear, dear Charles, while my brief respite permits the task.'

"I wrung my hands in utter agony. 'Why

did you forsake us?—Why—why did you ever desert my sister's protection;—Lilias! was that well done?'

"'It was! it was!—I had already become the victim of outrage;—with an unstained heart and guiltless will, I had no longer the right to intrude my infamy upon the pure presence of Sophia.'

"'Great God!—what monster—'

"'There was but one among us so hardened in the commission of crime! Your warnings should have forearmed me against his wickedness; yet Heaven knows, that no levity, no partiality on my part, could afford even a shadow of pretence for the vile passion with which he presumed to insult me, and for the intemperate desperation that urged its last—worst injury!'

"'You should have sought redress from those who loved you—you should——'

"'No! no!—from that horrible hour—spare me the recital—I became in my own eyes a worthless and degraded thing. There was

nothing left for me but the grave; and I retired to the desolation of solitude, that I might learn the task of dying in peace and Christian resignation. It was from *his* hateful aspect that I chiefly fled; yet although in your search after me, you frequently, very frequently touched the threshold of my obscure retreat,—*he*—he was more vigilant. He found me! and the letters which he then addressed to me *as his wife*—by his name and rank, in order to blind the inmates of my miserable home, secure by the Scottish law, the legitimate claims of our wretched child.'

" She paused, interrupted by her tears. 'And did you then admit his own claims upon your hand,—upon your tenderness?'

" 'Charles! that question is not from your former heart! Oh! no;—again I fled—to England—and at length to safety from my persecutor. Oh! no!—had I not still loved you,—*you only*—in spite of my shame, in spite of my sorrow,—I had not dared, even in my agony, to curse that unborn babe to whose existence I

could no longer blind myself. But when the little outcast was indeed born to me, although it had *his* looks, his own hateful smile, yet I did not curse it then!—oh! no—no—no! I never cursed my miserable child again.'

"She seized it in her arms, and almost stifled it with kisses as she spoke; and with the utmost violence to my own feelings, I attempted to bestow some slight caress upon the sleeping infant.—But it could not be!—The poor mother noticed my movement of loathing with renewed tears.

"'Surely you will not refuse it your protection,' she pleaded; 'I am hastening to my grave; and my last hope, my last prayer implores that it may never be given to my daughter to know her father's name; that you may take her to your bosom, and teach her to love you, Charles, even as I have ever loved you; and that you may impart to her helpless orphanhood the impulses of your own good and generous nature. *You* alone are capable of this Christian deed—from you alone I seek it; and oh! do

not embitter the struggle of my parting hour.

"'Fear it not, Lilias! fear it not—but you shall live—you shall yet be happy, you shall *yourself* bestow your motherly protection on your child.'

"'During the last six months, I have wrestled with poverty and disease, that I might be the nurse of its infancy,'—she faltered;—'but the resources of life, and of life's sustenance, are at length exhausted. See!' said she, removing the bonnet by which her countenance, had been hitherto obscured, 'see, and judge whether I have many hours to linger!'

"Great Heaven! shall I ever forget the piteous spectacle she revealed to me!—The glassy eyes, the clammy brow, the blackened lips, the fleshless skin, scarce clinging to the prominent features! Despair,—that leprosy of the soul,—had eaten into her very nature; and life appeared to hover with a feeble tenure round the surviving wreck.

" 'My Lilias! my precious Lilias!' I exclaimed, sinking at her feet.

" 'Hush!' said she, repelling my embrace. 'Do not hasten my departure! I must not pollute your dwelling, Charles, with the dying hour of my shame! I must away to the place from whence I came, and wherein I have prepared for my lonely death-bed! I must tear myself from this creature—this precious and innocent thing;—from *you*, Charles—from the sight of your pity;—I must seek my remaining consolation in the mercy of that God who hath never yet wholly abandoned me.'

" 'And think you I will suffer you to go hence—to part thus from your babe?'—

" 'Hush! hush! do not waken it, do not distract me! But take it in your arms, and swear to its dying mother that you will never desert it; that you will become its father,—that it shall know no other.'

" How could I choose but comply? I *did* swear!—and from that moment she assumed a

calmer tone. She placed it in my bosom;—arose firmly from her seat,—stretched her wasted hand over us both, as if in benediction;—and, ere I could intercept her movements, she glided from the room.

"Alas! she did not proceed far. Having hastily deposited the still sleeping child, I rushed out to her support.—The parting struggle had been too much for her attenuated frame; I found her in convulsions on the threshold of my door.—I summoned my servants, conveyed her to bed;—and medical aid was procured.—Throughout the night her agonies grew fainter and fainter; and, when the morning came, I was weeping beside her breathless body, with her motherless infant nestling in my bosom!—My Lilias!—my beloved—my betrothed—my last, my only earthly blessing, was before me in the stillness of death!—And, oh! with what an intensity of abhorrence could I have crushed into similar extinction the human fiend, of whose arts she had become the innocent victim!

"Unconscious of its desolation—pleased in its

innocence by the warmth and food with which it had been tended, and by the fond caresses with which I pressed it to my heart, the little creature began to breathe those infantine murmurs of joy, wherewith it had been wont to reward its mother's tenderness. And as she lay there in the vestments of death, —cold and wasted, and shrunk into the nothingness of mortality,—methought a smile appeared to spread itself over her placid features, to see us already thus united in the holy sympathy her dying words had bespoken!

"My first movement was to summon my brother to my desolated abode, for counsel and for consolation. He had known the progress of my grief; it was fitting that its last mysterious crisis should not be withheld from him. Prompt in admitting the sacred and peremptory nature of the embarrassing duties I had undertaken, he would not hear of the retributive vengeance I was burning to wreak upon the triumphant author of all my calamities. He forced me to acknowledge that in her last hour of conscious-

ness, my Lilias had implored that the memory of her injuries should be 'writ in water;' and had even exacted my solemn promise, that no future temptation of worldly advantage for her child, should induce me to reveal the mystery of its birth. 'In attempting a hostile meeting with this unmanly wretch,' argued my brother, 'you will at once violate your word, and render the delicate circumstances of Miss Sinclair's calamity a matter of vulgar scandal. But, worse than all this, you will afford to the unprincipled man, you have so much reason to abhor, the claims of parental authority upon yonder helpless girl; whom you have engaged to retain under your own guardianship, and to whom the mischief of *his*, would be indeed unspeakable.'

"I had no reply to offer to this last plea. I strove to appease my desire of revenge—of retribution. As an appointed minister of the omniscient Being who has claimed the right of vengeance as his own, I acknowledged, though not unmurmuringly, the duty of submission.

My brother exerted all his usual friendly indulgence towards the violence of my emotions; but he pointed out to me the added necessity for my immediate ordination, and settlement in a permanent home; and, ere he returned to his own, he supported me by his presence during the last painful ceremonies in which I was permitted to mark my tenderness for the departed;—and by the side of her mother's coffin, he shared in my Christian sponsorship for her abandoned child! He gave her our own mother's name, with the addition of that of the village in which she had become my own.

"With the exception of the good old clergyman, who had been admitted to minister to the deathbed of the unhappy Lilias, all the inhabitants of Dudley regarded my little charge as the offspring of my youthful indiscretion; and on this, and many other accounts, I was eager to hasten my removal. Within the year, I was ordained, and settled in my rectory; the vicinity of which to my brother's dwelling afforded us those frequent opportunities of meeting and

communication, so precious to us both. He appeared indeed to watch, with an interest little inferior to my own, the growth and intellectual development of my little Florence; till Lady Agnes, who had now two sons of her own, interrupted the expression of his benevolent tenderness, in her mean jealousy of the child's superior beauty, and singular talents. How dear—how preciously dear, she now became to my own feelings, I cannot, and I need not, express. I have looked upon her face, till I was almost happy. Nor is it wonderful that she should have rewarded my devoted affection with all the fervour of filial love! From her early infancy, till a recent period—when for the first time she seemed to perceive and resent the reserve I have necessarily held towards her on the subject of her parentage—my sweet Florence has ever borne herself towards me as the tenderest and most submissive of daughters!

"She was in her fifth year when, by the death of my brother, I was visited with my final, my irreparable loss! From that hour Northum-

berland afforded me a harassing and miserable residence. My excellent brother's untimely end—the consequence of an accident in the field—had found him unprepared with testamentary dispositions; and Lady Agnes, in claiming the legal guardianship of her sons, had pointedly excluded me from all participation in the office. In a few months I found myself scarcely less pointedly excluded from their very dwelling; by the sarcasms of her noble relatives, and by her own affected apprehensions that, at some future time, I should attempt to promote an attachment between the youthful heir of the Hall, and my own *little changeling*. It was thus she always designated my ward; and, finding myself more inclined to resent her insolence than I could have wished to feel towards the widow of a brother so gratefully, so fondly venerated, I resolved on quitting a neighbourhood which had become distasteful to me. A removal to another kingdom, *to Ireland*, suggested itself as a secure escape from the suspicions that might be attached to my little girl,

and to her connexion with myself. The friendship of Lord Willersdale fortunately availed to favour my wishes; nor did I hesitate to approach him with a request, manifestly proceeding from no interested motive.

"And thus did Florence and her guardian become domesticated at Willersville; where uninterrupted peace and happiness have furthered his endeavours to render her all that could have been desired by her unhappy mother. The friendship of the worthy Mr. Daly, the maternal affection of Lady Theodosia Mitford, have given to this secluded retreat the social comforts so necessary to the formation of a youthful mind; while the liberal facilities afforded by Lord Willersdale, have endowed us with the fullness of literary resource; and have lightened the duties of my own parochial ministry by an unlimited command of his authority and munificence, in regard to the interests of my congregation.

"It were vain to deny that my own failing health, and daily experience in the precarious-

ness of human existence, tend at times to depress my mind with anxieties touching the future destinies of my more than orphan girl. The sparings of my frugality have, however, in a sufficient degree, augmented my originally scanty patrimony; and for her eventual protection—I bequeath her in all trust to the God of the orphan and the widow, who tempereth his storms in mercy to the shorn wanderers of his fold!"

It may be believed that the tears of the compassionate Lady Theodosia had not been withheld in the perusal of the Manuscript, whose defacement already bore traces of the irrepressible grief of its writer. But, on the whole, notwithstanding the intense sympathy excited in her bosom by the sufferings of the injured Lilias Sinclair, she was in some degree consoled and re-assured by the information she had acquired respecting the origin of her young friend. That Florence Dudley was free from the legal stain of illegitimacy, was one step

gained over the prejudices of the General, towards her union with his nephew. Fortune—a minor, although in the present instance an important consideration,—might still be vouchsafed by some strange caprice of destiny; the only apparently *insurmountable* obstacle to a marriage, between Harry Mitford and the object of his earliest affections, was already removed.

With this consolatory fact uppermost in her thoughts, Lady Theodosia, with a cheerful face of welcome, prepared herself to meet Lord Barton; who was expected, and who duly arrived, at the lodge in time for dinner. His greeting with his two sisters was warmly affectionate, but in various degrees. Towards Lady Theodosia he entertained the reverential regard due to an esteemed friend; towards Lady Isabella, that fond, but anxious love which bestows itself on those

> Whose good and amiable gifts
> The sober dignity of virtue wears not.

"Well, Horace!" exclaimed the latter, on the termination of her eager embrace, "have

you brought any news to this dullest of dull worlds of ours?"

"On the contrary, I expect to learn a great deal from yourselves; such as that Belle Vyvyan has been transformed, by much solitude and much meditation, into a reasonable being!"

"*Comme Gribouille—qui s'est jeté dans l'eau, de peur de la pluie!* But tell me,—are you disposed to fall in love with a person, who is both reasonably grave and unreasonably beautiful? and are you prepared to find your London idol, Lady Willersdale, transformed into the common-place, domestic, loving wife, of an adoring husband."

"Lady Willersdale cannot be common-place, and was never otherwise than loving to her lord. But, by the way, I *have* some news to tell that concerns them both. The Delvile administration is certainly at an end; and Lord Willersdale as certainly succeeds."

"Well, well;—let the ball at the castle be once fairly danced to an end, and I care not how soon I make my curtsey of congratulation

to the new premier. Vyvyan's incalculably boring father insists on our passing the next season in town; and I wish for no more agreeable distinction than to find myself the friend of Lord Grizzle's delightful wife. *On pourroit plus mal tomber!* Besides, our pretty Florence will become the Helen of the belligerent powers of fashion."

"While *I* shall grievously and irreparably miss the society of both," said Lady Theodosia, mournfully.

"You could scarcely expect that Lord Willersdale would content himself at the Castle for any prolonged period," observed Lord Barton. "A man accustomed, like himself, from early youth, to the abundant society of the enlightened and the illustrious,—who has seen a whole nation spell-bound by the words of his lips,—whose influence has been felt to the remotest verge of Europe, cannot be required to restrict his ambition within the narrow bounds of Willersville—to content himself with its limited and vulgar society. You might as well attempt to

shut up the tides of the ocean within the banks of a fish-pond."

"And his beautiful wife!—Surely, Barton, *you* did not dream of tempting *her* to resign the park, the opera, and Almack's, and flirtation,—for a *tête-à-tête* with her very respectable and very tiresome husband; enlivened occasionally by Madam Daly's graceful *agaceries*, and our dear Dosy's moral documentations?"

"I should certainly advise both Lady Willersdale and yourself to dispense with one or two articles in your catalogue of pleasures!—I perceive, dear Belle, that I must resume my old office of monitor."

"Remember!" cried the giddy Lady Isabella, flying towards the door to escape to her toilet,—"remember that

Le raisonneur tristement s'accrédite;
Ah! croyez moi---l'erreur a son mérite."

END OF VOL. II.

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